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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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The triumph that was John F. Kennedy's life shines in William Manchester's new bestseller.

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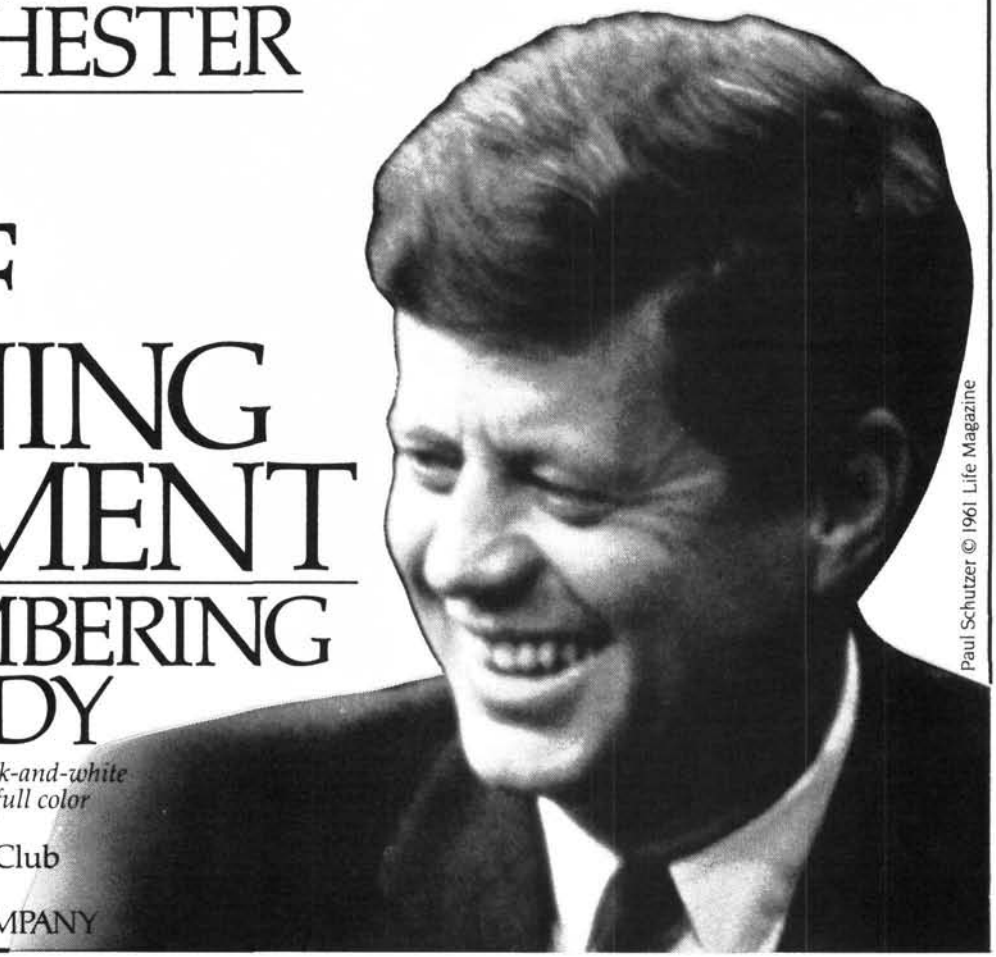

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DENBY'S 'RING'

To the editors:
In response to David Denby's overly long article, "By Wagner Possessed" (TNR, October 3), we wish to express our appreciation to TNR as the only magazine—to our knowledge—which has given such exhaustive (and exhausting) space to the *Ring*.

While we appreciate Denby grinding an axe for the La Scala performance of Wilhelm Furtwängler's magnificent recording, it seems to us—and this Denby failed to point out—that there are *no* "definitive" performances, on or off recordings, ever available. The reasons are as simple as they are complicated. Denby did point out the vast musical and *philosophical* differences which more divide than unite performance. This will always be so; and we believe that Wagner did *not* intend to set "standards" for *Ring* performances (or for his other operas). He *insinuated* his wishes but refused to finalize a bar, let alone an entire opera (see his numerous letters to King Ludwig II).

And, while we agree with Denby that the TV production of the *Ring* by Patrice Chéreau was a compromise all around, it certainly was not the last word, a matter vastly underplayed by the media (TNR excluded).

HANS A. ILLING
Wilhelm Furtwängler Society
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:
This is in appreciation of David Denby's thoughtful and brilliant piece on the Boulez-Chéreau *Ring* and on Wagner in general in your October 3 issue. Bravo. Mr. Denby is mistaken, however, in characterizing Theodor Adorno's *In Search of Wagner* as a "loving, tormented critique." Adorno's book is an ill-willed, spiteful, and partisan attack on all aspects of the composer's art.

HAROLD BLUMENFELD
St. Louis, Missouri

MANGER DANGER

To the editors:
TRB's comments ("Away With A Manger," TNR, October 31) on the A.C.L.U.'s efforts to stop government-sponsored religious displays are a disappointment. Nothing in the campaign is directed toward "eradication of the majority culture," as TRB suggests, and his notion that that majority culture "needs some degree of government sanction" is bizarre. Christmas and Good Friday are legal holidays because hardly anyone would show up for work if they weren't, not because of any official sanction.

In the end, the issue comes down to the "outsiderness" in which TRB revels. He writes: "I would not want my child to grow up completely comfortable in his surroundings, never forced to question his identification with the American culture." Precisely! To a great extent, his outsiderness is *his choice*, and should come from his identification with the cultures he chooses, not from the expenditure of public money.

No majority needs government support for its culture, except insofar as all members of society can partake equally of the benefits. The right to be an outsider brought my parents (and TRB's) to these shores; government-sponsored outsiderness was what they fled.

ROGER L. LUSTIG
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:
May a WASP who believes in the First Amendment ask your new TRB whether he cannot get his winter-solstice dose of angst just as well from a privately supported creche as from one paid for with public funds?

JOHN M. MAYS
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
God bless you, one and all, for TRB's well-deserved criticism of the American Civil Liberties Union's questionable priorities. While I agree in theory with the A.C.L.U.'s stand that tax dollars should not be spent for religious public displays, I cannot help but wonder why it has placed such importance on this relatively passive constitutional infraction; particularly during a time when civil and constitutional rights are being flagrantly ignored by government on all levels.

GREGORY JOHN TYREY
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

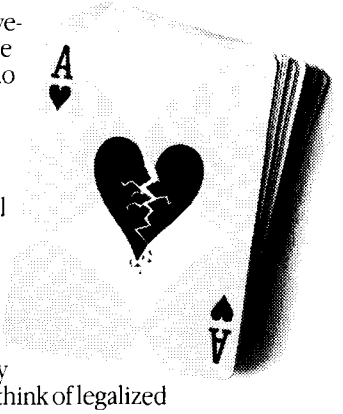
continued on page 48

How a city's dream became a painful reality.

In November 1976, in an attempt to rejuvenate a dying urban area, New Jersey became the first state since Nevada to legalize casino gambling.

This book reports the results of this experiment, appraises the effectiveness of legalized gambling as a tool for economic revitalization, and assesses its monumental costs especially in terms of human hardship, exploding crime rates, rising housing costs, the lack of real employment opportunities, the strains on municipal services, and political corruption.

It is critical reading for politicians, policy analysts, urban planners and citizens who think of legalized gambling as a panacea for economic ills.



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FROM WASHINGTON

Doctor Bill

If the Pentagon is to be believed, eighteen American Marines died invading Grenada primarily in order to protect several hundred Americans attending a medical school perched at the edge of a runway at the now-famous Cuban-built airport there.

Does it strike you as odd that hundreds of Americans should be studying medicine on an obscure Caribbean island? It strikes them as pretty odd. St. George's Medical School, founded in 1976, is a product of the almost hysterical desire of bright young Americans to become doctors. Despite a doubling of spaces in American medical schools since the mid-1960s, it is harder than ever to get in. So fifteen thousand American medical students (about one in five) are now enrolled abroad.

St. George's is an entrepreneurial venture set up specifically for Americans. The "chancellor," a businessman, and the admissions office both operate out of Bayshore, Long Island. The chancellor reportedly negotiated with several tiny islands before selecting Grenada. School legend has it that in the early years cadavers for anatomy class had to be flown in secretly at night, to avoid upsetting superstitious locals. The old pre-Cuban airport had no runway lights, so the planes were guided in by taxicab headlamps. The natives are friendly; the school has become the island's largest employer.

After completing this peculiar education, graduates who wish to practice in the United States (as they all do) must run a gantlet of obstacles set up by the American medical establishment, which doesn't relish the increased competition. Why do they do it? A tiny news story the week before the invasion gave one answer: the average income of doctors is now almost exactly $100,000. That's after all expenses, and it also includes young doctors just starting out. They can expect to make far more at the peaks of their careers. Dedication to a worthy profession also plays a part, of course. But only medicine combines an opportunity for good work with the certainty of getting rich.

Now, there's nothing wrong with paying doctors well. They're highly trained and they work hard. But $100,000 *average*? Even in a capitalist system, this kind of money should be reserved as the carrot dangled before all but given to the very few who make it to the top of a particular calling, or as the payoff for those who've risked everything on a long shot. With young people kicking and clawing to get into medical school, and thousands who'd make fine doctors turned down, these huge incomes clearly aren't the result of supply and demand.

In fact, though doctors have always been prosperous, the really dramatic swelling of their incomes began in 1965 with Medicare. Through Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs, the government now pays close to half the nation's annual health bill, and does so in ways that guarantee doctors will get rich. In all the talk about high health care costs and how to reduce them, one factor is often overlooked: we simply pay doctors too much.

The government makes no attempt to dicker, as you or I might before shelling out $75 billion or so. Under Medicare, for example, it simply determines "the rate prevailing in a given area" for a particular service, and (unless the doctor is foolish enough to charge less) sends a check for 80 percent. The patient is supposed to pay the rest. Most of the time, the patient pays far more than this since doctors charge Medicare patients, on average, a third more than the "prevailing rate." This is only possible because Medicare is paying most of the cost. And the higher fee then helps set the "prevailing rate" for next year.

The House Ways and Means Committee surprised everyone and threw the American Medical Association into a panic late in October by proposing to end this sweetheart deal (but only for hospital patients). It would temporarily freeze Medicare reimbursements. More important, it would forbid doctors from charging Medicare patients more than the government-set rate.

The A.M.A. declares (or rather,

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
NOVEMBER 21, 1983

ANATOMY OF A LITTLE WAR

The war in Grenada confirmed everybody in what they believed: America is an angel, America is a devil. These are not beliefs that facts may change, since facts are not what they are fashioned of. Anyway, the American action is not the sort of thing that puts the world in a new light. A great power has made an adjustment in its field of force, as a great power will. From the standpoint of history, the war in Grenada may lack the merit of magnitude. But for the present, with a military melodrama that the nation has not enjoyed in many years, it has put the question of the purposes of American power. What's our fist for? Why are we in Grenada? These are questions that many Americans are asking, and that the Administration is answering with mixed success. It has produced a variety of justifications, and until the full story of the American assault is told—as it will be soon, despite the Administration's stupid decision to keep the fighting off limits to the press (which may have been spared the chance to misreport another war)—the best we can do is review the justifications critically, and establish what they do and do not justify.

The first thing to establish is the definition of the American action. According to Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, it was not an "invasion" but a "rescue." A rescue indeed it was, but it was also an invasion. The Oxford English Dictionary perfectly describes what we did: "*Invasion* . . . an entrance or incursion with armed force, as in Tonstall's sermon of 1539, 'If they shal persyst in their pestilent malice to make invasyone into this realme.' " Nor is there any profit in denying that the United States defied the principle of nonintervention, and perhaps international law, when its Marines hit these beaches. But the idea that the United States must honor the principle of nonintervention above all else should be called by its proper name. It is isolationism, and it must be challenged. There are times when it is moral for a country to cross into another country. There are times when the rigid respect for sheer sovereignty is a form of indifference to human suffering. The critics of the Grenadian war point to Afghanistan and accuse the United States of having lost "the moral high ground." (The phrase turned up on the opinion pages of both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The comparison between Mr. Brezhnev's war and Mr. Reagan's war was made most notably by Willy Brandt, though the President should welcome this endorsement from the man who evaluated the Soviet deed as an exercise in self-defense.) It is true that the invasion of Grenada was like the invasion of Afghanistan, since it was an invasion; but there the similarity stops. To be sure, borders must not be violated without compunction, or for the ends of conquest. And when they are violated for the ends of rescue, there is still a moral trade-off. But it is intellectually dishonest and politically irresponsible to think that international law and the idea of nonintervention are all you need to know for the purpose of passing judgment. The reality in Grenada matters, too.

Also, it is not the calling of the United States to go around the world fixing things. Foreign policy is not one of the helping professions. But not all the critics of the Grenadian war are isolationists. They are not offended by the prospect of an American fix; they simply want the fix elsewhere. The President tells the nation that Grenada was governed by "thugs," but there are "thugs" too in other regions of Central America. In El Salvador, for example. In Haiti, too. In the event of an American landing in San Salvador, however, or in Port-au-Prince, how many of these people would have raised their voices and reminded

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us of Grenada? These double standards, the right's and the left's, are an old story. The point here is that many of the President's critics flatter themselves. They do not have "the moral high ground." They have a different vision, and their vision is no more morally capacious than his.

The spokesmen for the President and the Pentagon have presented the case for their action in ways that are hard to credit. Still, the official justifications for the invasion of Grenada are a mixture of excuses and sound political judgments, ideology and a genuine willingness to help.

The United States invaded Grenada to rescue Americans. This was the first justification and the flimsiest. Indeed, it is a mere excuse. There is no evidence that American nationals, many of them medical students in St. George's, were in any peril. There are medical students in the Bronx who have more to fear. Moreover, those Americans who wished to flee in the aftermath of Maurice Bishop's fall could easily have done so. The pictures in the papers of "rescued" Americans kissing the tarmac are supposed to recall the return of the hostages from Iran; it was "another Iran" that the Administration wished to avoid (and "another Beirut" and "another Nicaragua" and "another Cuba" and "another Surinam"). But there was no such danger. Moreover, this litany of official nightmares suggests that our policymakers have memory before them, not history. The difference is important. History is not what political consultants warn you about. Memory is.

The United States invaded Grenada to rescue Grenadians. This cannot be so easily dismissed. In fact it cannot be dismissed at all. Grenada was in the grip of dictators, under Maurice Bishop and under Bernard Coard. The Administration, in an exquisite exercise in high-placed hypocrisy, now speaks wistfully of the late Prime Minister Bishop as the martyr of Grenada; its original opposition to the man was more on the mark. Maurice Bishop charted a course for Grenada that consisted in a crazy, Cuban-controlled militarization of a place that needed nothing military. He toppled the dictatorship of Sir Eric Gairy, and replaced it with a new type of dictatorship. The personal whims of one ruler were exchanged for the revolutionary whims of the other. And Mr. Bishop was deposed for not going fast enough. It appears that he committed the counterrevolutionary crime of considering a friendlier approach to the United States. Grenada's new governors murdered Bishop and members of his movement and proceeded to place the entire population under house arrest. By all accounts they were state-of-the-art zealots for the revolution, and it is no wonder that the Grenadians are not now behaving in the sullen manner of occupied peoples. They feel freed, and they should; the Marines freed them.

The Marines did not come to Grenada, in other words, to reverse social progress. There was no such progress to reverse. It is important to understand the full meaninglessness of the idea of revolution for a society like Grenada. A political change was made for the sake of the redistribution of wealth, but there was no wealth to redistribute. In Grenada the only thing there was to redistribute was power, which has been the frequent historical function of revolutions. Lofty language and incandescent ideals have often served as a mask for private ambition and public hardship. Grenada was no exception. There is little doubt that life on the island will be better because the Marines landed. And that is the standard by which political change must be measured, not by the extent of its fidelity to words and dogmas and myths.

The United States invaded Grenada because the Organization of East Caribbean States asked it to. Some skepticism on this score is warranted. Many invasions have been invited. Such invitations, for example, are the sterling style of Soviet imperialism; the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was preceded by a rank request for it, as was the occupation of Afghanistan. Once again, however, differences must be noted. For a start, the O.E.C.S. is not the Warsaw Pact. It was not formed by the United States out of its neighbors' captivity, or as an instrument of its interests. Quite the contrary, the East Caribbean states entered into it freely. The O.E.C.S. is a regional arrangement rather characteristic of the post-colonial world, and it is not the only organization created in the wake of Britain's renunciation of rule in the region. There is no reason to believe that the alarm of Grenada's neighbors was not genuine. Small nations do not welcome the soldiers of large nations on a lark. Moreover, the soldiers of the United States arrived in Grenada to effect precisely the opposite political change that the soldiers of the Soviet Union effected in—well, everywhere they arrived. We moved against a St. George's winter, not a Prague spring.

Naturally this does not suffice to explain American intervention. The United States cannot be expected to act on such invitations at all times and in all places; and there are many such invitations from countries in dire need that the United States would surely decline. Nor is the O.E.C.S. exactly a major player on the world's stage. The Reagan Administration had its own reasons for wanting to be rid of the new Grenada. Still, its reasons coincided with a worthy regional concern. The Administration's bad guys happen to have been bad guys.

The United States invaded Grenada because it was becoming a Soviet and Cuban base. Well, not quite. The evidence of Soviet and Cuban involvement in Grenada that the Administration has so far brought before the public does not indicate that a military installation of a major kind was underway. In fact, the quality of this evidence has produced for the Pentagon a good old-fashioned credibility problem. The contractor who built the infamous runway, furthermore, has said that it was not furnished with the requirements of military use. The number of Cubans on the island is less than the Administration claimed; and there are only thirty Soviet advisers (though we note that those who scorn the Administration for being disturbed by thirty Soviet advisers in Grenada are themselves disturbed by fifty-five American advisers in El Salvador). Reports of the presence of East Germans and Koreans on the island, which would suggest that the Soviets' floating

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foreign policy apparatus made it to Grenada, have not been corroborated. And Fidel Castro threatened to break relations with the Coard coup, and ordered the Cubans on Grenada not to fight.

Grenada was not exactly a vital Cuban or Soviet interest; but the Cubans and the Soviets are not lavish in the labeling of vital interests. (The United States might take a lesson from that.) Still, Grenada was an unvital interest. The Bishop regime allied itself not merely with Cuba, but with Libya, Syria, Algeria, the P.L.O., the Polisario Front, and other agents of international anarchy. In the United Nations it voted with the Russians on Afghanistan—that is to say, it cast one of the most ignominious votes the General Assembly has ever counted. And the transformation of this paradise of pink drinks into a garrison state was certainly not motivated by a fear of its neighbors, which are also paradises of pink drinks. Though the complete chronicle of Grenada's recent development is not yet known, the fact of its secession from its democratic community of small pro-Western states is beyond dispute. Even if the Marines did not get there "just in time," as the President said, and even if the President's fixation on this dimension of the problem is not without a touch of fantasy, the fact is that the political direction and military orientation of Grenada was not of the kind that would keep the peace under the palms.

The United States invaded Grenada because it needed to demonstrate its military might. Or, as it is more commonly said, we had to win one somewhere. There is a great deal of truth to this. The invasion of Grenada was indeed an expression of emotion, a psychological satisfaction, a use of force by people who enjoy its use, a proof of power by people who need it proved. We won one somewhere. Bully for us. Too bad, though, that it was in lovely little Grenada. Whatever its moral or political justice, this projection of military power is not about to strike terror into the hearts of Sandinistas or Shiites, and future historians of warfare will not linger long over the battle of Port Salines. The patriots who are persuaded that the American position in the world was restored in Grenada are deceived. They are deceived about Grenada and about America's position. Our place in the world has not deteriorated so far. Where it matters most, in Europe and in the Middle East, the United States has not lost the recent contests with the Soviet Union. The Pershings and the cruise are to be deployed, and Israel is in the most secure situation in its history, Soviet and Soviet-inspired efforts notwithstanding.

Nor have the American people become quite so abject as these patriots think. It is not unhealthy to prefer peace to war; and the American people's affection for America was not born of war. Pro-Americanism, wherever it exists, is not a martial enthusiasm; it is a philosophical and political enthusiasm. The American people, furthermore, have not revolted against the use of force in their name, as their support for the Grenadian action shows; they have revolted only against the use of force that strikes them as implausible or improper, and for that the denizens of this democracy cannot be faulted. Pity the patriots, the President included, who fault them.

A critical review of the explanations of record, then, does not quite leave an impression of imperialism. The war in Grenada was not the outrage of our time, nor was it America's finest hour. Principles of international order were violated and principles of democratic life were vindicated. America's adversaries suffered a setback—not a major one, but enough of one to embolden Surinam, for example, to rid itself of its Cuban help. No doubt there will be a political price to pay for the invasion, in Western Europe briefly and in Latin America less briefly. But good for the Grenadians, and if we properly understand the strengths and the weaknesses of such a use of military power, good for us, too.

RAYMOND ARON, 1905-1983

Raymond Aron was probably not the greatest French intellectual of his age. Sartre was more brilliant, Lévi-Strauss more original, Foucault more profound. It was Aron, however, who never lost his head.

This was quite an achievement in his times. These were times in which many heads were lost—or, to be more precise, many heads were lost in the East and many minds were lost in the West. The question that was decisive for intellectual identity in this period was Communism, and the support of the Soviet Union. Many French intellectuals, with Sartre in the lead, sold their souls to the revolution, and started to lie; when the revolution in Russia could no longer be defended, some of them sought other revolutions to fortify their faith. And they wore their disillusion as proudly as they had worn their illusion. For this reason they scorned Aron. He was never illusioned and he was never disillusioned. "How many intellectuals," he asked in *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, "have come to the revolutionary party via the path of moral indignation, only ultimately to connive at terror and autocracy?" Since Aron was not a sucker for eschatology, he saw the Soviet Union clearly throughout his (and its) career. He measured political systems by the amount of freedom they allowed, not by the amount of romanticism they realized; and so the Soviet Union, and most of the other dictatorships that hid behind the language of liberation, never fooled him. At this late date, when the Gulag has entered the West's vocabulary, it is hard to imagine the intellectual courage that such dissent required. But Stalinism seduced some of the smartest men and women of the age, and to those who thought freely about the pernicious political orthodoxy they showed no quarter.

Aron's lifelong disputation with the religion of revolution earned him a reputation as a "conservative." This was never quite the case. The spirit of Tocqueville, to whom he liked to compare himself, lived in Aron, but it lived with

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the spirit of Max Weber. Aron's primary contribution to French sociology was its introduction to Weber. And his primary contribution to French politics was its introduction to Weber's exemplary sort of distressed liberalism, which consisted in the conviction that there is nothing immoral in caring about how the world really works. Indeed, it is immoral not to care, because fantasies can kill. (It was this pragmatism of principle that motivated Aron's opposition to France's colonialism in Algeria.) Aron believed in reason, but not in the eighteenth-century way. He believed in it not because most men are rational but because most men are not. His works on war and peace, particularly his important study of Clausewitz and his analysis of NATO strategy, all breathed this bleak determination. Rationalism without optimism—that may be the best that the twentieth century can do.

This has been a golden age of intellectuals, except that not many of them could be trusted. For that reason this man will be missed. You could trust him.

NOTEBOOK

□ A TEAM OF THREE AMERICAN psychiatrists recently returned from the Soviet Union where they spent two weeks filming children at Pioneer youth camps. Their shock finding: Russian kids worry about nuclear war. We understand that the trio's next scientific mission to the Soviet Union will prove that ordinary Soviet citizens put their pants on one leg at a time, and that the vast majority are less than ten feet tall.

□ WITH THIS ISSUE Jefferson Morley joins THE NEW REPUBLIC as associate editor. Most recently an assistant editor of *Harper's*, he has also worked at *Foreign Policy*, *The Washington Post*, and his hometown newspaper, the *Minneapolis Tribune*, and as press secretary to Roxanne Conlin, the Democratic candidate for governor of Iowa in 1982.

□ TWENTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "By Saturday night, even the television seemed worn out by attempt and failure and ceased to comment and gave over to a succession of photographs of the columns and the windows and the corners of the White House and of the shadows of the great Lincoln head in Springfield and to a voice reciting, 'Oh, Captain, My Captain.' It is to be, then, the grand style. But the ship has not weathered every storm; Mr. Kennedy is not Abraham Lincoln; not because he is more or less, but because he is a remembered physical presence and Mr. Lincoln an image of the plastic arts. One's own time is personal, not historical. Just how long will it be before many of us will want to read a book about the day Mr. Kennedy was shot?" ("Romans," by Murray Kempton and James Ridgeway, December 7, 1963.)

JFK plus 20: foreign policy.

LOST FRONTIER

FOR MOST Americans past 35, the shots that rang out in Dallas on November 22, 1963, mark a definite break in the nation's post-World War II history. They closed an era when we felt self-confident, prosperous, and as unified on the basic issues of domestic and foreign affairs as the citizens of a democracy can be. From the moment of the assassination, we entered upon a period of upheaval that put in doubt America's political and economic health and its capacity to lead and instruct the world. Even though the main catalysts of that revolution of lowered expectations, Vietnam and Watergate, are behind us, and even though the domestic situation of the past few years might be described as one of uneasy normality, the feeling that there are no international or domestic problems that can daunt this country—the spirit epitomized by the style and oratory of John F. Kennedy—has not returned.

Yet a historian must insist that this description of the popular mood of the Kennedy years, as well as of the whole postwar period up to 1963, be severely qualified, especially concerning foreign affairs. During the Kennedy years, official Washington was far from exuding that arrogant belief in "American omnipotence" of which it was subsequently accused by some critics. Those were years of grueling worry for every American policymaker, starting with the President. There were moments of almost unendurable tension and anxiety at several points in the Berlin crisis of 1958 to 1962. We may think that our concern about the threat of nuclear war is higher than it has ever been. But during the Cuban missile crisis there was a widespread fear, and among those close to the White House a virtual certainty, that a fatal American-Soviet clash was imminent.

To the apprehensions about what the Soviet Union might do, induced largely by Khrushchev's relentless bluffs and nuclear missile-rattling, was added the fear of a still more ominous danger: what would Mao's China do once it acquired a stock of nuclear weapons? Beijing's uncompromising hostility to the capitalist West, and to the United States in particular, was seen as irremediable. And through their rhetoric Mao & Co. managed to convince some Washington circles that once they acquired nuclear weapons they would view the prospect of a new world war with equanimity or even with satisfaction, bound as such a war would be to lead to the final triumph of socialism.

It is true that the Kennedy team took office in a spirit of buoyant optimism. The departing Administration's failures in foreign policy were attributed to the stodginess and the dogmatic anticommunism of its Republican businessmen and politicians, and to the negative image of America they had fostered in much of the world. The new

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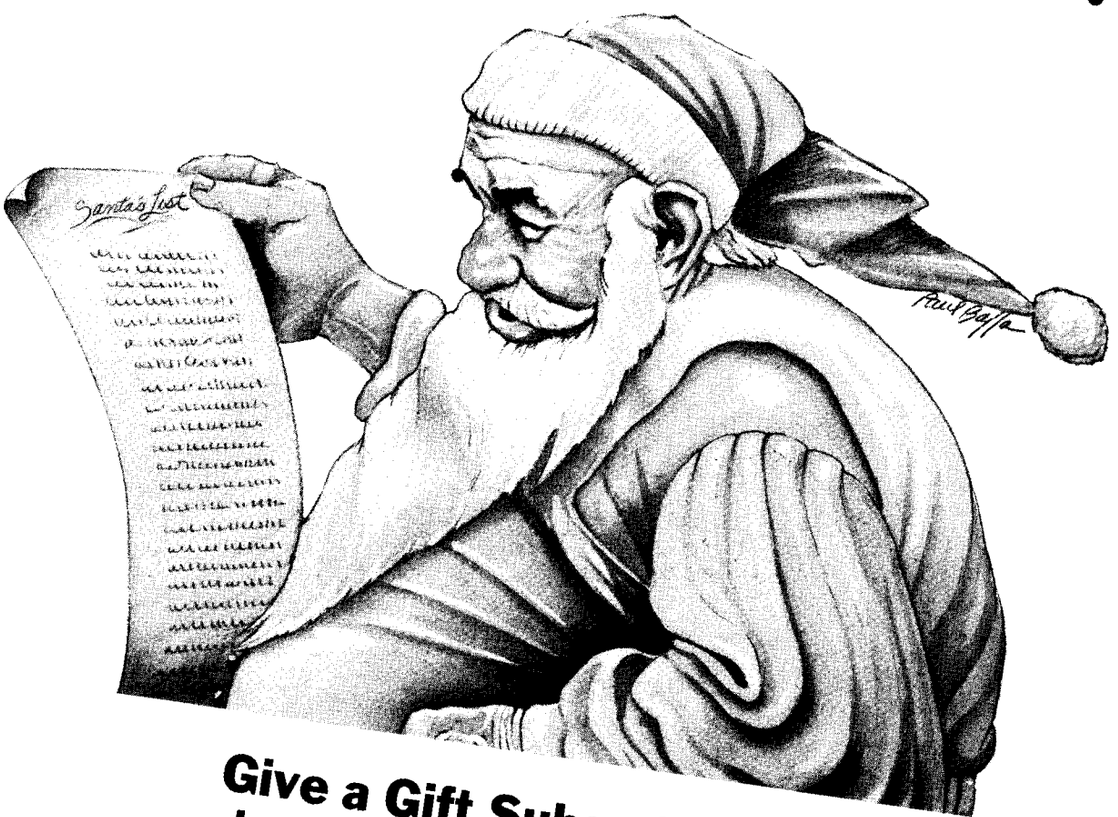

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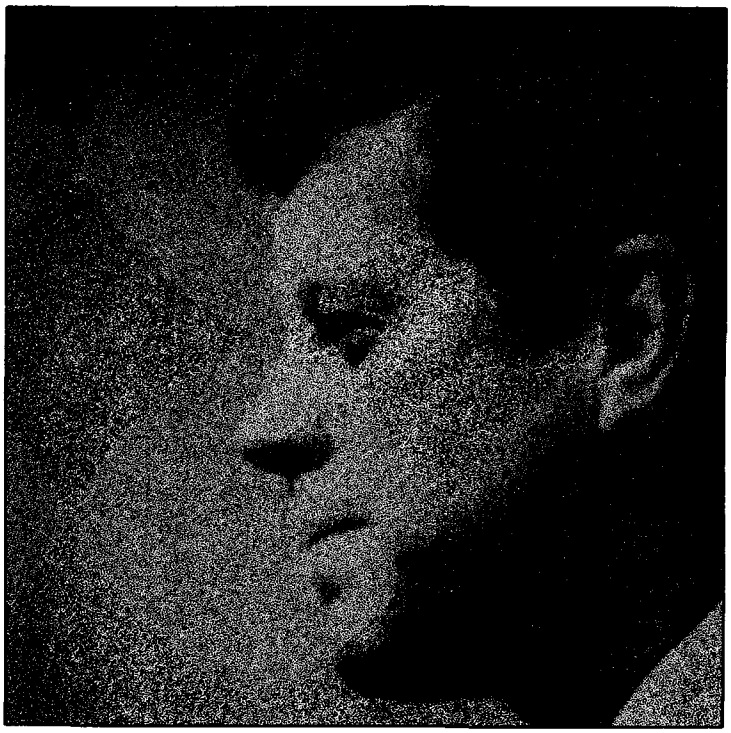
Administration regarded itself, and was very much regarded by the mass media, as embodying Youth, Brains, and Progress. The Russians and the new nations were bound to recognize that they were dealing with people who, though uninspired by the goal of "making the world safe for capitalism," would be tough as well as principled and liberal in their policies.

Indeed, the new men were capable of a more imaginative and flexible approach to foreign policy than that embodied in Dulles's incantations about "massive retaliation" and "rollback," or represented in the *immobilisme* of Eisenhower's last years. It is not quite fair to picture Kennedy, as Henry Fairlie put it a decade ago in *The Kennedy Promise*, as "locked in the ideology of the cold war," or to assert that "for all its quickness and curiosity, the mind of John Kennedy does not appear to have been equipped to cope with complexity." In 1961 the most liberal and openminded occupant of the White House could not have ignored the Soviet Union's propensity for mischief-making; and even had he been equipped with the wiliness of Talleyrand, he could not be expected to resolve all the agonizing dilemmas of the ever-quickening flux of world problems.



JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1960. PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY DICKERSON / DREW ASSOCIATES 1983.

Much of Kennedy's difficulty in foreign policy had its source in the perennial vagaries of American politics. A man seeking the Presidency must devote practically all his time and energy, for at least two years before the nomination and the election, to domestic issues and campaigning. No matter how sagacious his task force on foreign policy, he almost inevitably comes into office with his mind *not* attuned to those minutiae of the world situation that are so important in dealing with foreign nations. This applies particularly to the Soviet Union, whose foreign policy might be described in a phrase Verlaine applied to his image of an ideal woman: "Never quite the same, never completely different." The successful management of foreign affairs requires firm leadership by a President familiar with the internal politics of the other superpower, no matter how knowledgeable and competent the Secretary of State; and Dean Rusk was virtually unknown to the President before the interview during which he was offered the job. (In his imaginative reconstruction of the Kennedy era, Anatoli Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister's son, asserts that Rusk was imposed on Kennedy by the Rockefellers—the proof being that he was then head of the Rockefeller Foundation—to balance the influence of a rival capitalist clan, the Fords, who had dictated the appointment of Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense. But nothing in Gromyko's venomous book will shock the former inhabitants of Camelot as much as his statement that during Kennedy's visit with de Gaulle, "French cuisine made a strong impression on the Americans, used to the monotonous fare of the White House.")

In Kennedy's first months in office, his Administration's self-confidence, not to mention its "tough" self-image, received a rude shock from which it did not recover until October 1962: the Bay of Pigs fiasco. The Soviet Union is relentless in exploiting any false move by its opponent. It was a mistake for Kennedy to seek a summit meeting so soon after the Cuban misadventure. In June 1961 the President went to Vienna armed with all kinds of expert advice on how to deal with Nikita Khrushchev. He tried to talk about the balance of power ("the Russians are realistic"), then about the American sympathy for change and decolonialization ("they believe we want to preserve the status quo"). Nothing worked. Khrushchev was at his bullying and hectoring worst. After the meeting two events followed in quick succession: the building of the Berlin wall beginning in August 1961, and later that same month, the Russians' breach of the informal moratorium on atmospheric nuclear testing. The Soviet tests continued for two months and culminated in the explosion of the most powerful nuclear device ever tested. There could be no military purpose in exploding a fifty-seven megaton weapon. Its real purpose was to shake still further the nerves of the leaders in Washington and in the West generally.

It is a tribute to the young President's resilience that through all these humiliations he managed to preserve an outward composure. Privately his frustration was expressed in irritation with the State Department and the military bureaucracies, and in his increasing tendency to seek advice from special task forces and from elder statesmen like Dean Acheson. But alas, there are issues of international politics that are not susceptible to solution by committee or by drawing on the experience of the past.

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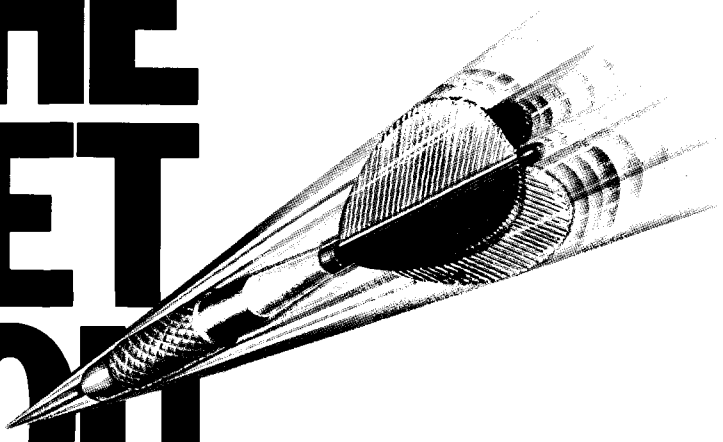

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The United States would immediately lose 3,000 steel-making jobs at Fairless Works – and would soon lose 75,000 to 100,000 other steel-making jobs in other steel mills. Jobs in iron ore and coal mining would disappear too, as would jobs in the service industries which supply steel mills, steelworkers, coal and iron ore mines.

The British steel mills produce these slabs with huge government subsidies. Ironically, U.S. Steel in the past has been an outspoken critic of the dumping of subsidized foreign steel on the American market. Now, the company is saying that even if the British deal falls through, it will seek similar arrangements with other countries.

Since foreign steel facilities are usually government-owned and highly subsidized, American workers and companies find themselves in the position of trying to compete with a foreign government.

It can't be done. Take wages, for example. While some people seem to think American steelworkers make far more than we actually do, workers in steel-making facilities in many foreign countries make barely enough to survive.

Anything approaching such a wage scale in this country would result in a severe depression for everyone. Nobody could afford to pay American-style medical bills, taxes, home payments or food bills on such wages. Neither could they afford American automobiles, consumer goods or educations for their children. The result of such a low-wage policy would be devastating, not only for hourly workers, but for business and professional people and all others in our society.

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What the American policymakers most needed in those hectic months of 1961-62 was a fundamental understanding of the real condition of the Communist world, not a series of position papers on the theme, "How can we make the Russians see reason?" Khrushchev, who to some in Washington loomed as a modern Genghis Khan, triumphant and still bent on advance, was in fact in dire straits. At home, the Soviet Union was afflicted with food shortages, and the Chairman's Politburo colleagues were growing increasingly skeptical about what they would call (after his removal) his "hare-brained schemes." Abroad, the man who taunted the President of the United States was being defied by little Albania and scourged by the Chinese Communists.

HAD AMERICAN policymakers paid close attention to the Soviet Communist Party's Twenty-Second Congress in October 1961, they might have gleaned what was behind the Soviets' ultimata about Berlin. Khrushchev's oversubtle—indeed, hare-brained—scheme was aimed at accomplishing two main goals: first, to bully the United States into signing a German peace treaty; and second, to secure American collusion in dissuading China from producing its own nuclear force. This could come about, he believed, if he was allowed to offer Beijing some quid pro quo—say, the withdrawal of U.S. protection from Taiwan. Berlin was just the lever to pry the peace treaty out of Washington, and then, it was hoped, to induce it to adopt a common stance on nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. At the Congress there were the usual bombastic threats about the U.S.S.R. not tolerating the Berlin impasse much longer. But someone in Washington ought to have flagged a passage in Gromyko's speech. "Our country places special importance on the character of the relations between the two giants: the Soviet Union and the United States. If our two countries united their efforts . . . who would dare and who would be in a position to threaten peace? Nobody. There is no such power in the world." These words made a big impression in Beijing but none whatever in Washington, and after the Vienna summit they sounded like a mockery.

For all the experience of the "old Soviet hands" in Kennedy's entourage, it seems that the profusion of task forces and position papers tended to block his view of the Soviets' real motivations and fears. The same was probably true of developments in Southeast Asia. The various counterinsurgency and nation-building theories, then quite fashionable in Washington, were proving increasingly attractive to the President, who, disenchanted with professional diplomats and the military, became increasingly impressed by brilliantly reasoned, but not always realistic, academic theories and memoranda.

Finally deciding that Berlin was too dangerous an instrument of blackmail, Khrushchev turned to Cuba. Kennedy's stance in the Cuban missile crisis is still considered his personal triumph, the high point of his Administration. And in large measure this judgment is correct. The Berlin crisis was abruptly terminated. Khrushchev's agreement to the Test Ban Treaty of 1963 reflected his chastened mood and his new respect for the United States and its President.

Yet one must feel that the Administration could have exploited the Soviets' discomfiture more fully had it not collapsed from relief when Khrushchev pulled out the missiles. This was the time for new American initiatives on Germany, on restructuring NATO, and perhaps on trying to wean Castro from the Soviets, at whom, for the moment, he was furious. Kennedy, with his new self-confidence and stature, was now ready for a summit meeting that would have been quite different in its character and results than the one in Vienna. Perhaps Southeast Asia issues might have been ventilated (at the time it was Beijing, not Moscow, which was pushing Hanoi to intensify the civil war in the South) and the subsequent tragedy of Vietnam averted. And despite the Soviets' new determination to catch up with the United States in strategic weapons, if pressed they might not have been averse to an arms control agreement more advantageous from the American point of view than SALT I was to prove.

IN HIS SPEECH at American University in June 1963 Kennedy did indeed envisage prospects of a Soviet-American détente. Yet pleas for mutual understanding were not accompanied by an awareness of how critical the situation of the Moscow regime was at the moment: the Sino-Soviet conflict was at its height, Khrushchev was struggling against his fellow oligarchs, and the confidence of the whole Communist world in Soviet leadership was shaken by the retreat in Cuba. But whatever Moscow's willingness for concessions at the time, it was soon to disappear as America became increasingly engrossed in Vietnam and the Cultural Revolution plunged China into virtual chaos.

In a sense the consequences of the Dallas tragedy for America's foreign policy can be likened to those of Roosevelt's sudden end. It was only shortly before his death that F.D.R. began to take the true measure of Stalin and of the Soviets' intentions. And, quite apart from his office, only Roosevelt had the power to undo the effects of his own previous misperceptions and errors concerning the Soviet Union. It seems another irony of history that John Kennedy died precisely at the moment when, after three years of painful lessons in the complexities of international affairs, he stood ready to assume real leadership of what the Americans then, without any inhibitions, called the free world.

ADAM B. ULAM

Adam B. Ulam is Guerney Professor of History and Political Science at Harvard University. His most recent book is *Dangerous Relations: The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1970-1982* (Oxford University Press).

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JFK plus 20: guile and charm.

THE POLITICIAN

"EVERYONE ought to run for office," John F. Kennedy used to tell his friend Ben Bradlee when, as often happened, some unelected bureaucrat made an embarrassing mistake. "It's as simple as that." Kennedy was not an intellectual, a white knight, a scholar, or a saint. He was a politician, and a brilliant one. His political skills are a key to understanding both his rise and his Presidency.

Initially, J.F.K. owed his political career to his father. Joseph P. Kennedy, a rich, powerful, prejudiced man, intended to see a son in the White House, and when Joe Jr. died in 1944 Jack was called upon to take his place. But those who, like Harry Truman, regarded Jack as his father's pawn were mistaken. He recognized his father's limitations. As early as 1940, when Joseph Kennedy sought to keep the U.S. out of war, Jack supported aid to Great Britain in the columns of *The Harvard Crimson*. "You know," the senior Kennedy later remarked to his New Deal associate, William O. Douglas, "I can't understand how the two men that I admire most in public life, my son Jack and your own self, stand for ideas that I so bitterly oppose." During the 1960 Presidential campaign, after Robert Kennedy's telephone calls had secured Martin Luther King Jr.'s release from a Georgia jail, King Sr. stated publicly that he would not hold the candidate's religion against him. "Imagine Martin Luther King having a bigot for a father!" Kennedy remarked—and then added wryly, "Well, we all have fathers, don't we?"

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Before Kennedy's Presidency, his record as a public servant was undistinguished. During his fourteen years on Capitol Hill he originated no important legislation. He was frequently absent from Washington, both because of political commitments and because of his health. His positions were those of a Democratic centrist: sympathetic to organized labor, moderate on civil rights, happy to do a bit of Red-hunting among unions in the late 1940s. But by 1960 Kennedy had emerged as a master of electoral politics. To the obvious assets of good looks, family, and almost unlimited financial resources he added developing skills as a speaker and an unmatched knack for face-to-face communication. His humor was an inestimable asset, especially since he himself was so often the butt of his jokes.

The power of his charm was most apparent when used to deceive. When Drew Pearson doubted Kennedy's authorship of *Profiles in Courage* during a December 1957 television interview with Mike Wallace, the Senator called him into his office for a friendly chat. Pearson, perhaps the hardest man in Washington to intimidate, was nonetheless persuaded by Kennedy's familiarity with the details of book that, despite much help, it "was his book." "Sometimes I am a sucker for a nice guy who presents an appealing story," the columnist noted in his diary. "I'm not sure whether this was the fact in my talk with Kennedy or not. He did not ask me for a retraction but I think I shall give him one." But Pearson had been a sucker: Herbert Parmet demonstrated beyond doubt in his 1980 book, *Jack: The Struggles of J.F.K.*, that *Profiles in Courage* was the work of a team headed by Ted Sorensen and Professor Jules Davids of George Washington University.

An even more revealing exchange—reported by Parmet—took place in 1960, after Fletcher Knebel had unearthed a story about Joseph Kennedy securing a key 1952 endorsement of his son's Senate candidacy from the financially troubled *Boston Post* with a $500,000 loan. After persuading Knebel to go with the official Kennedy family explanation that the loan was an ordinary commercial transaction, Jack put his hand on the reporter's shoulder. "You know," he said, "we had to buy that fucking paper or I'd have been licked."

Kennedy's political skill enabled him to eliminate the anti-Catholic barrier in national politics. Not for nothing did more voters turn out in 1960 than in any subsequent Presidential election; it was a well-run contest between two clever candidates. A widespread myth holds that Nixon bested Kennedy in substance in their televised debates, but this is not supported by the text. And when the debates were rerun in 1976, the overwhelming impression they made was of the superiority of both Nixon and Kennedy to Ford and Carter in intelligence, command of issues, and delivery. These were the most successful of a generation of brilliant politicians, including Hubert Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson, Nelson Rockefeller, Everett Dirk-

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Piano Concerto No. 1; *Francesca da Rimini*; Violin Concerto in D Major; *The Sleeping Beauty*, Suite; Symphony No. 6 (*Pathetique*); Serenade for Strings; and more. (Cliburn, Ormandy, Munch, Reiner, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, others)

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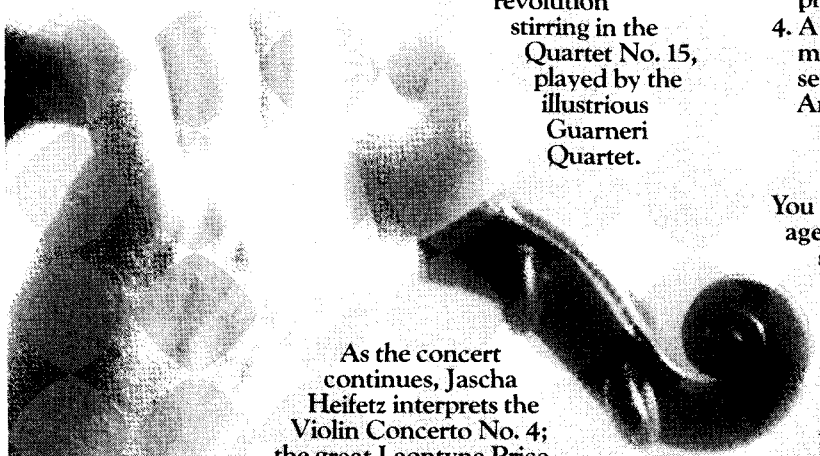

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sen, Estes Kefauver, and Adlai Stevenson. We have not seen their like since.

As President, Kennedy disappointed liberals by his failure to push their agenda of aid to education, Medicare, and civil rights more effectively, but he probably had a better sense of the mood of the country than they. Despite large Democratic majorities in Congress, key committees remained firmly in the hands of Southern conservatives. Kennedy shrewdly husbanded his political capital until faced with a true national crisis: the problem of civil rights.

The President contributed only indirectly to the growth of the civil rights movement. His own views were distinctly ambivalent. Confronted with the problem of African ambassadors who were forbidden to eat at roadside restaurants between New York and Washington, he suggested that they fly. In the spring of 1961 Attorney General Robert Kennedy asked freedom riders to call off their campaign because "the President is going abroad, and this is all embarrassing him." Yet J.F.K.'s rhetorical commitment to freedom for all Americans inspired demonstrators, both white and black, to try to make his words come true. The sit-in movement spread rapidly through the South, leading to a near-revolution in Birmingham, Alabama, in the spring of 1963. Then Kennedy responded—both because of a gradual change in his own views, and because a constituency for dramatic steps had emerged.

It was Kennedy, not Lyndon Johnson, who in 1963 introduced sweeping civil rights legislation designed to deal with education, voting rights, employment discrimination, and above all with exclusion from public accommodations. And although Johnson's unparalleled legislative skill eased the bill's passage in 1964, it almost certainly would have passed under Kennedy as well. At the time of his death a redrawn bill was nearing House passage, and in the Senate the key contact—with Republican leader Everett Dirksen, whose support could stop a Southern filibuster—had already been established.

Kennedy's contribution to the end of legal discrimination in the South was his major domestic achievement. And although his civil rights stance cost him some popularity points, his Gallup poll rating still stood at 59 percent shortly before his death—higher than any other postwar President at the same stage of his term except Eisenhower. Had he lived he would certainly have defeated Goldwater.

IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS Kennedy's Presidency is widely viewed as the apotheosis of the cold war, but here, too, his views evolved as circumstances changed. Certainly his 1960 campaign rhetoric and his inaugural address focused on Soviet-American confrontation and competition. Given the temper of the times this was inevitable. Neither Nixon nor any of the other Democratic candidates took an appreciably different view of the world situation: the Soviets had determined to conquer the world, and only we could stop them. Newly independent nations were an especially crucial battleground, and it was not only right but necessary that they follow the American path. In his first year in office, faced with Khrushchev's threats over Berlin, Kennedy took the possibility of all-out war seriously. He approved a massive strategic arms buildup even after discovering that the "missile gap" did not exist, built up conventional forces, and encouraged the construction of bomb shelters. Soviet-American relations did not improve during Kennedy's first two years in office.

Events moved more swiftly in the third world. Here Kennedy pursued a coherent, two-pronged policy: a no-holds-barred struggle against Communist-influenced regimes or forces, and an attempt to build up non-Communist democratic alternatives. Like Kennedy's rhetoric, his extralegal forays in the third world were not original. Both the Bay of Pigs invasion and the plans to assassinate Castro stemmed from the Eisenhower Administration, and the latter continued into the Johnson years. And though Kennedy pursued such plans with gusto, he coupled them with sincere efforts to promote democracy. In Latin America, in the Congo, and even in Vietnam, he painstakingly sought non-Communist democratic alternatives. The frequent failures of this policy reflected the weakness of the assumptions behind it. The dilemmas it faced still bedevil American policy in Central America and elsewhere. Kennedy's charm was as useful in dealing with the third world as it was at home, if not more so. New nations never forgot that in 1957 he was the first American statesman to call for independence for Algeria, and no other President has approached his popularity among the leaders and the people of less-developed nations.

Kennedy's handling of the Cuban missile crisis must also be evaluated in light of political realities. We can now appreciate that, as Robert McNamara pointed out then, the new Soviet missiles in Cuba would not have drastically affected the strategic balance. But this consideration must be weighed against the political reality of 1962. During the crisis Kennedy continually faced pressure from the military and from powerful legislators to take stronger action, not weaker. To solve the crisis he had to evade this pressure. On Saturday, October 27, with an invasion of Cuba only forty-eight hours away, Robert Kennedy saw Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. Publicly Kennedy could not trade U.S. missiles in Turkey for a Soviet withdrawal; such a step would have been labeled another Munich and destroyed his effectiveness. Privately, however, Robert Kennedy told Dobrynin that while there could be no question of a public deal, within a short time the Turkish missiles would be gone. Khrushchev announced the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba the next day.

Subsequently Kennedy dramatically eased Soviet-American tensions. His speech at American University on June 10, 1963, signaled a move away from the cold war. (Those who regard Kennedy as an arch-cold warrior might ponder how astonishing, and welcome, it would be to hear such a speech come out of the White House today.) The Administration negotiated the Test Ban Treaty, prevailed upon the Joint Chiefs to testify in its favor, and shepherded it through the Senate. With Kennedy's help, the vision of a death struggle with the Soviet Union quickly faded from American consciousness—a

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change confirmed by Goldwater's crushing 1964 defeat.

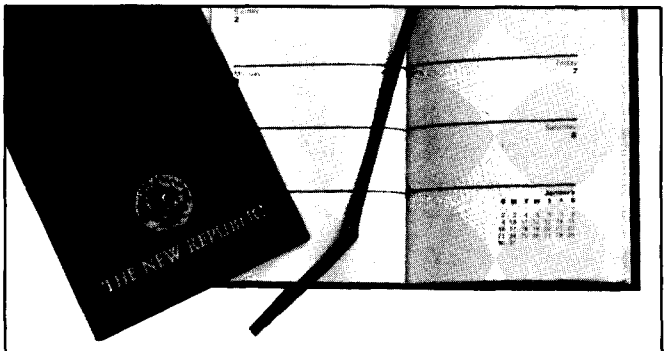
Whether a further re-evaluation of the cold war might have avoided the catastrophe of Vietnam remains the great unanswerable question of Kennedy's Presidency. For three years he tried to save South Vietnam without an American combat troop commitment. Had he lived, Kennedy, like Johnson, would have been faced with a choice between a total collapse of South Vietnam and a full-scale, open-ended, long-term commitment of American troops. His dovish comments to Mike Mansfield and Wayne Morse do not prove what he would have done, but they show a more flexible view than that of his successor. Political considerations would have inclined him against such a commitment at the outset of his second term, or against escalating U.S. troop involvement when its unpopularity became apparent. Perhaps he could have dealt with the painful lesson of our inability to achieve our aims at any remotely acceptable cost more effectively than did Johnson and Nixon. He could hardly have done worse.

Kennedy remains a significant historical figure because he was, for better or for worse, the incarnation of an era. In his time he and almost all Americans believed passionately in an American mission to secure liberty both at home and abroad, and in a need to demonstrate both the superiority of our system and the justice of our cause. The Peace Corps and the space program are perhaps the most appropriate symbols of his Presidency. They expressed our eagerness to show the way to new nations and to master exciting new technology. The millions who gathered around their television sets to watch the launchings from Cape Canaveral thrived on their country's efforts to match and surpass Soviet achievements, and shared the excitement of a new age.

Living today in a more cynical age, and aware of where our idealism led us, we often overlook the virtues of the early 1960s. Whites and blacks fighting for civil rights believed that the United States had to live up to its ideals at home—and not only to make them credible abroad. Our concern for the future produced perhaps the most beneficial educational climate in American history. As yet we saw no inconsistency between our world role and our democratic beliefs. And the willingness of American youth to fight and die for their country was a priceless national asset—a legacy of the Second World War that went up in flames in Vietnam. Now we are repeating some of the worst excesses of that period—a needless strategic buildup and new covert action in Latin America—but without any of the same idealism. The civil rights movement no longer draws Americans together; the sense of the United States as an example to the world is gone. In those days we erred on the side of idealism and overconfidence, but how much more have we erred on the other side since.

DAVID E. KAISER

David E. Kaiser teaches history at Carnegie-Mellon University.



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JFK plus 20: how it was, and how it might have been.

WHAT THE THOUSAND DAYS WROUGHT

BY ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR.

HE GLITTERED when he lived, and the whole world grieved when he died. In the twenty years since, his memory has undergone vicissitude. Grief nourishes myth. The slain hero, robbed of fulfillment by tragic fate, is the stuff of legend. But legend has a short run in modern times. "Every hero," as Emerson said, "becomes a bore at last." So in retrospect John F. Kennedy, the slain hero, the bonny prince, the king at the Round Table, the incarnation of youth and glamour and magic, is the object of disillusion and the target of attack.

The whole idea of Camelot excites derision. In fact, I am sure Kennedy would have derided it himself. No one at the time ever thought of his Washington as Camelot. It was a stricken Jacqueline Kennedy who first so portrayed it to Teddy White a week after Dallas. The Camelot idea was the initiation of the legend. It was not J.F.K.'s sort of thing. He was no romantic, but a realist and ironist.

All right, forget Camelot. How in his own terms does John Kennedy stack up as President? His reputation, revisionist scholars assure us, rests on style, not on substance. No doubt he had wit, charm, grace, and eloquence. But his soaring rhetoric roused expectations that politics could never realize; and, in any event, he cared less about passing legislation than about projecting his "image." In domestic policy, revisionists continue, history will remember him as a minor President of inconsequential achievement. Basically a conservative, he feared to risk popularity in the cause of reform. His liberalism was expedient and contrived, designed to seduce, not to succeed. His New Frontier was feeble and inauthentic next to the Great Society of his volcanic successor: Kennedy promised, Johnson delivered. Even his leadership in the civil rights struggle was forced upon him by events.

If revisionism finds Kennedy hopelessly cautious in domestic policy, it finds him (or the predominant school does) hopelessly bellicose in the world. He was, we are told, a rigid and embattled cold warrior, the reckless high priest of a cult of toughness. Where his predecessor, General Eisenhower, was a man committed to peace, Kennedy was a man addicted to crisis. He was a mindless activist, a war lover, who found macho relish in danger and felt driven to prove manhood by confrontation. Loving crisis, he provoked the crises he loved without regard to the perils for humanity. He brought the world needlessly to the brink of nuclear holocaust over the Soviet missiles in Cuba, entangled us in the Vietnam morass, ordered the assassination of Castro and probably Diem too, and was, in the words of the British historian Eric Hobsbawm, the "most dangerous and megalomaniac" of Presidents.

Thus the predominant school. A minority school, however, sees Kennedy as incorrigibly weak and vacillating in foreign affairs. The Bay of Pigs, snorted the peace-loving Eisenhower himself, should be called a "Profile in Timidity and Indecision." As for the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy, in Richard Nixon's judgment, "enabled the United States to pull defeat out of the jaws of victory." Instead of eliminating Castro, we guaranteed his safety against invasion and even left a Soviet brigade behind in Cuba, to be rediscovered by Jimmy Carter in 1979. "So long as we had the thumbscrew on Khrushchev," said Dean Acheson, "we should have given it another turn every day. We were too eager to make an agreement with the Russians."

Then there is the question of Kennedy's private life. We live in an age obsessed with sex. It titillates us to know that Jefferson, F.D.R., Eisenhower, Johnson, and Martin Luther King had (or may have had) mistresses. This obsession has bred the *National Enquirer* school of biographers, which includes people like Garry Wills and Ralph Martin, who collect unsubstantiated and unattributed rumors, treat them as if they were indisputable facts, and use them as the basis for a highly speculative character analysis. Every claim by anyone to have slept with John Kennedy is taken as gospel, though if half the claims were true he would have had time for little else. (One scholar has suggested that I write a sequel to *A Thousand Days* and title it *A Thousand Nights*.) As one who worked at the White House throughout the Kennedy years, I can testify that, if anything untoward happened at all, it did not interfere with Kennedy's conduct of the Presidency.

Still, the allegations have unquestionably contributed to the demolition of the Camelot myth—not that Camelot was a place known for marital fidelity. And the cumulative effect of these varieties of revisionism on some has been disappointment edging into bitterness, resentment bordering on rage. Remembering their days of naive faith and ingenuous hope, they now feel that they were manipulated, seduced, betrayed, and abandoned. Did he fool us?

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. is Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at the City University of New York. His latest book is *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Houghton Mifflin).

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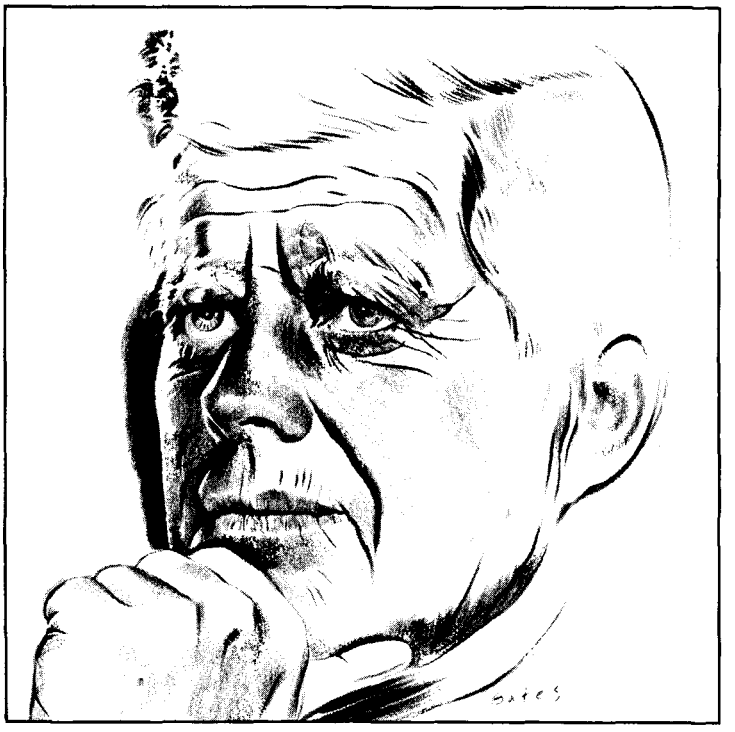
Did we fool ourselves? In meditating on this question, I must, as one who worked in Kennedy's White House, declare an interest. Still, let us consider dispassionately what Kennedy was up to as President.

Kennedy's campaign appeal in 1960 was to get the country moving again. He meant this in a large sense, hoping to lead an intellectual breakaway from the complacency and stagnation of the Eisenhower years. He meant it too in a more immediate economic sense; for the Eisenhower years had seen limping growth and three recessions, the last of which had bequeathed the Kennedy Administration 7 percent unemployment. Kennedy responded with a set of expansionist policies: the investment tax credit, the liberalization of tax depreciation guidelines, the containment of long-term interest rates through the "monetary twist," the promotion of worker training programs, and finally the proposal of general tax reduction, enacted in 1964. During the Kennedy years, economic growth averaged 5.6 percent, unemployment was brought down to 5 percent, and inflation was held at 1.3 percent.



JOHN F. KENNEDY AT 66—ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF HOW HE MIGHT HAVE LOOKED TODAY. BY DONALD GATES FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC.

Not a bad record; and the last item deserves particular notice. Inflation was not the issue in the early 1960s that it became later. Nonetheless it was a problem much on Kennedy's mind. He understood the vital relationship between inflation and productivity: increased productivity was the only way to absorb higher wages without driving up prices. The problem therefore was to keep wage increases within the limits of advances in productivity. To do this, Kennedy introduced his "wage-price guideposts" in 1962. It was United States Steel's cavalier rejection of the guideposts that led to the great steel battle late that year. When U.S. Steel raised its prices after the Administration had persuaded the union to accept a noninflationary wage contract, Kennedy exploded in cold anger—"My father always told me that all businessmen were sons-of-bitches, but I never believed it till now"—and forced the company to retract its action.

Kennedy's wage-price guideposts constituted a form of what we today call incomes policy. A basic dilemma of modern capitalism is the conundrum, thus far unanswered, of achieving full employment without inflation. Our recent Presidents—Ford, Carter, Reagan—have been able to figure out no way to slow inflation except by inducing mass unemployment, and no way thereafter to restimulate the economy without rekindling inflation. The Reagan Administration brought down inflation at the cost of nearly 11 percent unemployment. Recovery, given the present structure of the economy, will infallibly produce new inflation. So in recent times we have been on a dismal roller coaster: resorting to recession to combat inflation, and then resorting to inflation to combat recession. This is a hell of a way to run a railroad. The only way to combine high employment and stable prices is through incomes policy—through devising an institutional means of relating wages, prices, and profits to productivity. Kennedy perceived this twenty years ago. We will have to recapture that perception if we are ever to get off the roller coaster and bring stability into our economic life.

Kennedy thus sought, with skill and success, to ensure his expansionist policies against inflationary aftereffects. At the same time, he recognized that general fiscal stimulus, while it would increase aggregate output and employment, would not reach into pockets of localized and "structural" poverty. Income tax reduction, for example, was of limited help for people too poor to pay income taxes. The plight of the demoralized and inarticulate poor greatly concerned him. He had seen them in the black valleys of West Virginia when he campaigned for the Democratic nomination in 1960. He began to attack the "culture of poverty" with the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961 and the Appalachia program; and in 1963 he decided that, if these forgotten Americans were to be helped, tax reduction required a counterpart in the form of a comprehensive assault on poverty. "First we'll get your tax cut," he told the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers before his death, "and then we'll get my expenditure programs." Lyndon Johnson's war against poverty was the fulfillment of Kennedy's purpose.

In economic management, Kennedy was a most effective President. But his ambition for larger social programs—Medicare, federal aid to education and to the cities, civil rights—was frustrated by his parliamentary situation. For he had been elected President in 1960 with a slim margin of 120,000 in the popular vote. Though his Congress in 1961 was nominally Democratic, he lacked a working majority in the House of Representatives. Like every Democratic President since Roosevelt after 1938, he

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faced a House controlled by a conservative coalition made up of Republicans and Southern Democrats. With much of his legislative program thus blocked, he devoted himself to laying the groundwork for future action by education and persuasion.

The issue of equal opportunity for nonwhite Americans posed particular problems. If anyone had asked Kennedy in 1960 how he really felt about civil rights, he might have answered something like this: "Yes, of course, we must achieve racial justice in this country, and we will; but it is an explosive question, so let us go about it prudently." Like most white politicians, he underestimated the moral passion behind the movement. The protests of the Freedom Riders on the eve of his departure for his 1961 meeting with Khrushchev irritated him. He stalled on fulfilling his campaign promise to issue an executive order ending discrimination in housing financed by federal loans and guarantees; this was in part because he wanted Congress to create a new department of urban affairs, to which he planned to appoint Robert C. Weaver, a black economist, as secretary. (The House Rules Committee, fearing the idea of the first black cabinet member in history, killed the proposal anyway—which indicates why Kennedy despaired of getting comprehensive civil rights legislation.) He appointed Southern judges who turned out in some cases to be bitter-end segregationists; this was in part because he wanted the Senate Judiciary Committee, then headed by Jim Eastland of Mississippi, to clear the appointment of Thurgood Marshall to the federal circuit court. It was a time when advance seemed possible only by small trade-offs.

BUT IN THE COUNTRY a flame had been lit. Led by Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights workers, white and black, were bravely challenging the white supremacists. James Meredith applied for admission to the University of Mississippi, and the courts decreed he must be admitted. Governor Ross Barnett responded that Mississippi would "not surrender to the evil and illegal forces of tyranny." Kennedy, hoping to avoid violence, tried to work things out with Barnett. Negotiation was unavailing. An angry mob tried to prevent Meredith's enrollment. Kennedy sent in the Army to gain the black man his constitutional rights. It was the beginning of the mighty change, in Alabama and in the nation. Twenty-one years later Barnett attended a memorial service in Mississippi for Medgar Evers, who as state director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had encouraged Meredith's action and who was himself murdered a year later.

The change received new impetus in 1963 when Bull Connor, the police commissioner of Birmingham, Alabama, loosed police dogs against a nonviolent march led by Martin Luther King. "You shouldn't all be totally harsh on Bull Connor," Kennedy later told the black leaders. They were stunned until he added: "After all, he has done more for civil rights than almost anybody else." The shocking photographs of Bull Connor's dogs, teeth bared, lunging viciously at the marchers, transformed the national mood. Legislation now was not only necessary: it was possible. "I shall ask the Congress," Kennedy said, ". . . to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law." It was, he said, "a moral issue"—an issue "as old as the scriptures" and "as clear as the American Constitution." No President had ever spoken such words.

Kennedy was now fully committed. The political risks were acute; the fight drove him down in the polls from an overwhelming 76 to 13 approval in January 1963 to 59 to 28 in November (still not bad by latter-day standards). Opponents said that the civil rights movement was a communist conspiracy, that Martin Luther King was under communist control. Both John Kennedy and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, publicly went to bail for King. Privately they acceded to J. Edgar Hoover's demand that King be wiretapped, confident that this would disprove the allegations. Kennedy took King for a walk in the Rose Garden to warn him that he was under F.B.I. surveillance. (King, noting the fact that Kennedy had first taken him into the garden, reflected, "I guess Hoover must be bugging him too.") King did not hold the wiretaps against Kennedy, and, despite a general policy of not endorsing political candidates, planned to endorse him for reelection in 1964.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL was moving toward enactment when Kennedy was killed; so was the tax reduction bill. Grief speeded enactment; but, as Mike Mansfield, the Senate Democratic leader, later said, "The assassination made no real difference. Adoption of the tax bill and the civil rights bill might have taken a little longer, but they would have been adopted." What soon made a real difference was the 1964 Presidential election, which gave the Democrats an extra thirty-seven seats in the House, nearly all from the North, and thereby made Lyndon Johnson the first Democratic President since F.D.R. to have a working progressive majority in Congress.

Johnson was a man of formidable skills in dealing with Congress, and he used these skills brilliantly in the sessions of 1965-66. Still, what was decisive was the congressional arithmetic. In 1965 and 1966 Johnson won passage of more progressive legislation than any President since F.D.R.; but when he lost his working majority in the 1966 election, his Great Society petered out. Had Johnson been elected in 1960 with Kennedy as his Vice President, and had Johnson offered the 87th Congress the program actually offered by Kennedy, he would have had no more success than Kennedy—perhaps less, because he appealed less effectively to national opinion. If Johnson had died in 1963 and Kennedy had beaten Goldwater in 1964, then Kennedy would have had those lovely extra votes in the House; and political pundits would no doubt have contrasted his cool and efficient management of Congress with the ham-handed efforts of his predecessor. Too much has been attributed to parliamentary sorcery that is really due to the political mathematics.

One other point might be noted, in view of the White

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J.F.K. Remembered

Twenty years after the assassination, the memory of Jack Kennedy is touched with myth and grace. Look at the White House as you come down Pennsylvania Avenue. You think of all the great scenes and great laws and great men—Lincoln and Roosevelt and so on. But you may also give a sigh as you remember a young man who came here with his young wife, as you remember his good looks and hatless vigor and his controlled energy, like a kite zigging against the breeze.

We all knew, of course, that a Catholic couldn't be elected President. Look at Al Smith in 1928. And then, in 1960, another Catholic was running for President. I traveled with him on the Oregon primary campaign trail. He had beaten Hubert Humphrey in West Virginia, and in Oregon he was headed for another victory, against Wayne Morse. Intimacy with the press quickly develops in an informal primary battle. On May 17, 1960, five reporters flew with him to Eugene and Salem in his private twin-engine Convair. (It originally sat thirty or forty, but it had been turned into an elegant executive suite on wings.) The young man with slightly touseled brown hair, sitting calmly in the rear with his feet on the table, was willing to discuss anything. I have enigmatic notes on a slip of paper: "articulate . . . 'lahst' . . . self-confident, earnest, eager. . . . Gov. Lawrence (PA) is holding off [endorsement] because of Catholic problem . . . left hand in pocket."

Back in the hotel room reporters sprawl all about—friendly but observant—and the alert young candidate relaxes in shirtsleeves. Someone asks jokingly about his height. Before I know it, I am back to back with the candidate as a measuring stick because I am tall. Kennedy, it turns out, is about six feet.

On September 12 he goes to Houston to discuss religion. It is a pink-and-green-carpeted ballroom in the Rice Hotel, at 8:30, with three hundred members of the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and three hundred spectators. "We can win or lose the election right here," notes adviser Ted Sorensen (a Unitarian). Kennedy has barnstormed all day in Texas, with friendly greetings from curious onlookers. The mood here is chilly. His opening speech is short and clipped. He wants separation of church and state to be "absolute." The audience's doubts come out at once. Questions cover the areas of Protestant concern. How about the persecution of Protestant missionaries in South America? Kennedy warms to his reply and gets a flutter of applause before he is finished. No, he says sternly a minute later, he would not take orders from his hierarchical superior, Cardinal Cushing of Boston. What if he found conflict between his conscience and the responsibilities of the Presidency? He would resign, he says simply. You can feel the audience thaw. The filmed record will be used across the country for the next seven weeks. It is, I think, a historic confrontation.

There are also face-to-face clashes with Richard Nixon in the debates, with the largest audience in American history. Two-thirds of the nation's population watch or listen to the first of the four exchanges. Who "won"? Polls showed that among those who merely listened the verdict was about even. Among those who watched on television the advantage went to Kennedy. Nixon's makeup was poor. TV helped Kennedy, but the press went for Nixon—he got the editorial support of 78 percent of the newspapers whose publishers declared themselves. In the end, it was the closest election in years; Kennedy's popular majority was 120,000.

For the system of checks and balances to function swiftly, Congress needs a landslide, like Roosevelt's in 1932 and again in 1936. It wasn't that way in 1960. Kennedy wielded power vigorously abroad; he had defeats (the Bay of Pigs, Khrushchev in Vienna) and victories (the missile crisis, the Test Ban Treaty). But getting his sheaf of reform social legislation through Congress was another matter. All the brakes and stalemates of divided government in Washington came into play. Editorials expressed disappointment. Maybe the President wasn't getting out in the country enough. In November 1963, he decides to go to Texas to support his position. Jacqueline goes with him.

It is good weather so the plastic bubble top is removed and the bulletproof side curtains rolled down. Governor and Mrs. Connally are in the car. The procession goes by the old seven-story schoolbook warehouse. Mrs. Connally turns smiling and says, "You can't say that Dallas isn't friendly to you today!" The reply is cut off. "Jack, oh no! No!" cries Jacqueline. Why have we stopped? ask the reporters in the press cars.

Being President is one of the world's most hazardous jobs. A dozen Presidents have been attacked, four killed. There are fifty million handguns loose in the country and the paranoid National Rifle Association wants to keep it that way. Eighteen years after Dallas Ronald Reagan is nearly killed with a revolver from a pawn shop with an N.R.A. sticker on the wall: "Guns don't cause crime any more than flies cause garbage." Now it is the twentieth anniversary of Kennedy's death. The world moves on; it seems to grow more dangerous. On October 24 a suicidal driver in Lebanon wipes out an American barracks. How are we going to come unscathed through a world seeded with such dangers?

After J.F.K. died, Congress passed much of the legislation which he vainly asked for as President. Lyndon Johnson helped get it through. Civil rights, voting rights, Medicare—they were wreaths on young Jack Kennedy's coffin.

And there is the legend. "At night, before we'd go to sleep," Jacqueline explained, "Jack liked to play some records and the song he loved most came at the very end of the record. The lines he loved to hear were, 'Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, For one brief shining moment, that was known as Camelot.' " We'll probably remember him for that after all the rest. Songs linger longer than politics.

Richard L. Strout

Richard L. Strout, of *The Christian Science Monitor*, is a contributing editor of TNR.

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House feuds and the money scandals that have disgraced so many recent Presidencies. Kennedy's White House was small, generally harmonious, and honest. So was his Administration. Someone asked the columnist Jack Anderson, the Mormon Savonarola, which of the many Presidencies he had covered stands out as the cleanest. Anderson replied, "The John Kennedy Administration."

Looking back in the fall of 1963, Kennedy was unhappy that he had been able to devote so little time to domestic policy; that would be his priority in the second term. But foreign affairs had been exigent: "each day was a new crisis." Two weeks before his inauguration, Khrushchev had given a notably truculent speech in Moscow, promising communist victory in the third world through wars of national liberation, while at the same time arguing the impossibility of nuclear war between the superpowers. We can see now that Khrushchev had a double purpose: he was trying to tell the Chinese Communists, then in a fiercely militant mood, that he favored world revolution and the Americans that he favored peaceful coexistence. Inevitably, Beijing and Washington each believed the part of the message intended for the other. Kennedy's inaugural response, with its extravagant rhetoric about paying any price, bearing any burden, meeting any hardship, supporting any friend, opposing any foe in order to assure the success of liberty, resounded at the time, but in retrospect it was an overreaction. The distinctive note of the inaugural expressed a different concern. "Let us never negotiate out of fear," Kennedy said, "but let us never fear to negotiate."

Still, during his first months in office, each day did seem to bring a new crisis: Laos, where Eisenhower told him that the United States should, if necessary, fight "unilaterally"; the exile invasion of Cuba, which Eisenhower recommended should "be continued and accelerated"; the Congo; the Soviet astronaut in space; the assassination of Trujillo; the ardent Soviet support of "national-liberation wars" in Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam; the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev and the Soviet effort to drive the allies out of West Berlin; the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing. It was a grim year.

CONTRARY TO revisionist myth, Kennedy did not relish confrontation. "Prudence" was one of his favorite words. He well understood the limits of American power. When Barry Goldwater was crying "Why not victory?," Kennedy, in a speech nine months after the inaugural, reminded his countrymen ". . . that the United States is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, that we are only 6 percent of the world's population, that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 percent of mankind, that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity, and that therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."

But there could not be a Soviet solution either. Lines had to be drawn, and positions held. When Khrushchev refused a global standstill agreement at Vienna and threatened to disturb the international equilibrium by negotiating a separate treaty with East Germany, Kennedy forced him to retreat. And, if national-liberation wars were to be the great new Soviet weapon, ways had to be found to check such wars. This led Kennedy for a season into the fantasy of counterinsurgency—a mode of warfare for which Americans were ill-adapted, which nourished an American belief in the capacity and right to intervene in foreign lands and which was both corrupting in method and futile in effect.

Cuba became a particular target for covert action—the Bay of Pigs and thereafter infiltration, arms drops, sabotage. All this gave special power to the C.I.A., which carried its dark deeds further, judging by available evidence, than Kennedy knew. The project to assassinate Fidel Castro originated in the Eisenhower Administration (which recruited gangsters to do the dirty work). It continued through the Kennedy Administration and two years into the Johnson Administration. The argument is made that, because Kennedy was President, he *must* have known what the C.I.A. was doing. The argument applies equally to Eisenhower and to Johnson. There is no evidence that any of the three Presidents authorized or knew about (except as something over and done with) the C.I.A.'s assassination policy.

IN THE KENNEDY YEARS, the C.I.A. officers directing the assassination project did not even inform John McCone, whom Kennedy had appointed to succeed Allen Dulles as C.I.A. director. If they ever told Kennedy, they would have had to add, "By the way, don't mention this to McCone; he doesn't know about it"—an implausible bureaucratic situation. In the autumn of 1963 Kennedy altered his Cuban policy and explored through emissaries a possible normalization of relations with Castro. Ambassador William Attwood was set to make a secret visit to Cuba. But the C.I.A. kept determinedly and secretly on the assassination track. On November 22, 1963, a C.I.A. officer provided a Cuban defector with murder weapons for use against Castro. Kennedy was in Dallas.

Vietnam presented the most troubling case of national-liberation war. Kennedy accepted the line drawn by the previous Administration, and on occasion even endorsed Eisenhower's "domino" theory. He increased the number of American military advisers to more than sixteen thousand, of whom seventy-three were killed in combat. But he steadily opposed Pentagon recommendations for the despatch of American military units, and steadily pressed the authoritarian Ngo Dinh Diem to broaden his base through political and economic reform. Diem disdained such advice, and his brutal repressions led his generals to plot his overthrow. A message from Washington, later characterized by Kennedy as a "major mistake," informed the generals that the United States would recognize a successor regime. Nine weeks later the generals deposed and—despite American plans to fly him out of the country—murdered Diem.

Kennedy expressed his basic view in September 1963 when he said of the people of South Vietnam, "It is their

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Consumer
Orientation
No. 2 in a Series
of Technical Papers

Subject: Introduction of
the new 911 Carrera
Updated 911 Line

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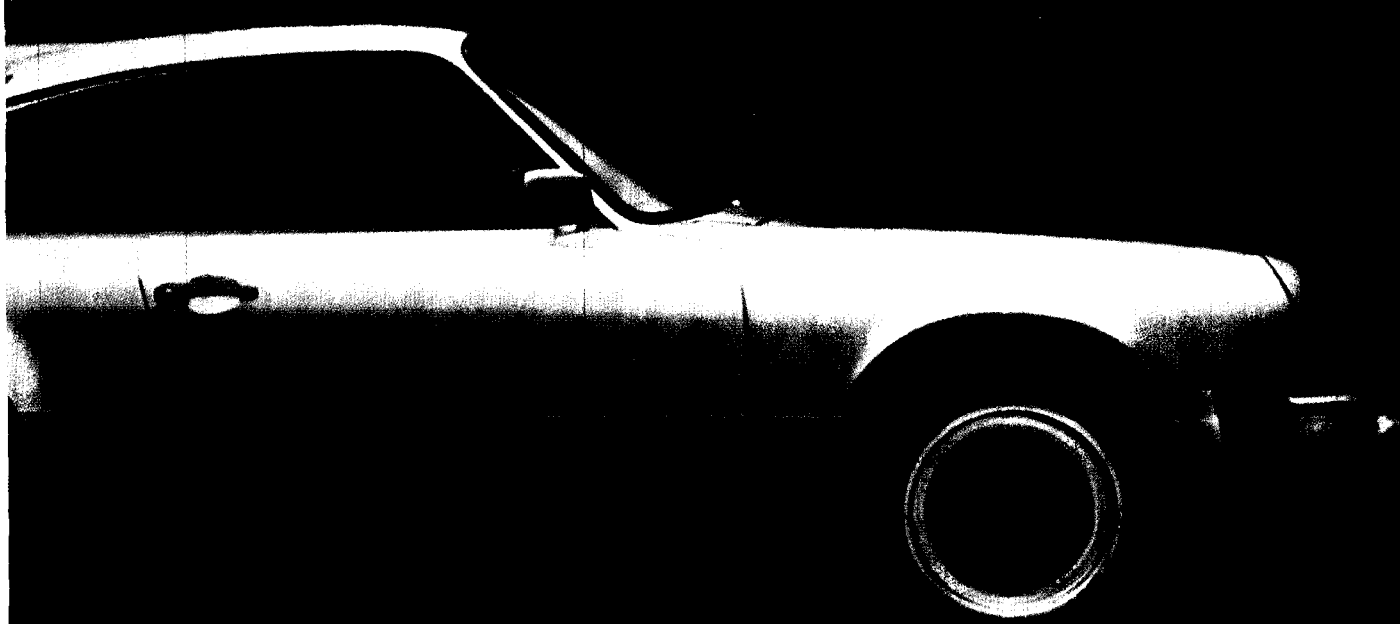

*EPA est. 20 mpg, 32 hwy. (Use "estimated mpg" for comparison. Mileage varies with speed, trip length, weather. Actual highway mileage will probably be less.) Obey your speed laws. © 1983 Porsche Audi

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war. They are the ones to win it or lose it." He had watched the French Army flounder in Vietnam a dozen years before and was sure that large-scale American military intervention would only rally the forces of nationalism against the invader. Among the revelations of the Pentagon Papers was Kennedy's plan for the complete withdrawal of American advisers from Vietnam by 1965—a plan canceled by Johnson a few months after Dallas. Kennedy confided to Mike Mansfield that his goal was total withdrawal; "but I can't do it until 1965—after I'm reelected." Otherwise the Republicans might beat him in 1964 over the "loss" of Indochina as they had beaten the Democrats in 1952 over the "loss" of China. Yet he never disclosed his intention lest the prospect undermine the Saigon regime. Though he privately thought the United States "overcommitted" in Southeast Asia, he permitted the commitment to grow. It was the fatal error of his Presidency.

THE SEARCH for military remedies in the third world was a wretched chapter in the history of American foreign policy. Nor have we yet shaken off the delusion. Instead we are repeating the folly in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Grenada. Though he had his counterinsurgency binge, Kennedy's long-term approach to the third world was not to repress symptoms but to cure maladies. "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible," he told the Latin American ambassadors in 1962, "will make violent revolution inevitable." His Alliance for Progress was designed precisely to encourage peaceful change. Even Castro called it "a good idea . . . a politically wise concept put forth to hold back the time of revolution." After Kennedy's death, his policy of supporting reform governments in Latin America was abandoned. Yet his Alliance is still a good idea, and we will have to return to something like it if we are ever to have a democratic hemisphere.

Kennedy saw nationalism as the most powerful political emotion of the time. His abiding purpose was to adjust American policy to what he called the "revolution of national independence" he saw going on around the world. His vision was of a "world of diversity"—a world of nations varied in institutions and ideologies "where, within a framework of international cooperation, every country can solve its own problems according to its own traditions and ideals." He summed up his policy in a deliberate revision of Wilson's famous line about making the world safe for democracy. "If we cannot now end our differences," he said, "at least we can help make the world safe for diversity."

In the nuclear age, he saw no alternative to a policy of prudence. "Mankind must put an end to war," he told the United Nations in 1961, "or war will put an end to mankind." General and complete disarmament was "a practical matter of life and death." When Khrushchev sneaked nuclear missiles into Cuba in 1962, Kennedy had no doubt that they would have to be removed. Revisionist critics call it a needless crisis and condemn Kennedy for not negotiating the missiles out by trading them for the American missiles in Turkey. It is clear now that this is exactly what he did. Had the missiles stayed, the '60s would have been the most dangerous of decades. And if the Kennedys had really been consumed by a mania to eliminate Castro, the missiles would have supplied the perfect pretext. Instead, Robert Kennedy led the fight against the surprise air attack, and John Kennedy made the decision against it.

Once the missiles were out, Kennedy forgot recrimination, forbade gloating, and moved purposefully toward a reduction of international acrimony. He worried, as he told me the morning after the crisis ended, that people would draw all the wrong conclusions; that they would suppose that in dealing with the Russians you had only to be tough and they would collapse. The missile crisis, he went on, had three distinctive features: we enjoyed local superiority; Soviet national security was not directly threatened; and the Russians lacked a case they could justify before the world. Things would be different, he said, when the Russians felt they were in the right and when their vital interests were involved.

His great concern, now more anguished than ever, was nuclear war. "I am haunted," he told a press conference in 1963, "by the feeling that by 1970 . . . there may be ten nuclear powers instead of four, and by 1975, fifteen or twenty." He got his timing wrong, but his point haunts us still. In his speech at American University in June he called on Americans as well as Russians to rethink the cold war. Both sides, he said, were "caught up in a vicious and dangerous cycle in which suspicion on one side breeds suspicion on the other, and new weapons beget counterweapons." Khrushchev called it "the greatest speech by any American President since Roosevelt." Twenty years after, alas, we are caught up in the same vicious cycle again.

Kennedy's first step in breaking out of the cycle was the limited Test Ban Treaty. To get this treaty ratified, he had to persuade, or at least silence, the congressional hawks and the military. He did this partly by minor concessions and partly by a speaking tour across the country. "One of the ironic things," he mused that year, ". . . is that Mr. Khrushchev and I occupy approximately the same political positions inside our governments. He would like to prevent a nuclear war but is under severe pressure from his hard-line crowd, which interprets every move in that direction as appeasement. I've got similar problems. . . . The hard-liners in the Soviet Union and the United States feed on each other." He was a peacemaker. "I had no cause for regret once Kennedy became President," Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs. "It quickly became clear that he understood better than Eisenhower that an improvement in relations was the only rational course."

Far from being a confrontationist, Kennedy was by temperament a conciliator. His greatest disappointment, he told Bobby in the fall of 1963, was that he had not been able to make more progress toward disarmament. He had proved his manhood on the PT boat in the Solomon Islands and felt no need to prove it vicariously by sending young men to kill and to die. He had the capacity to refuse

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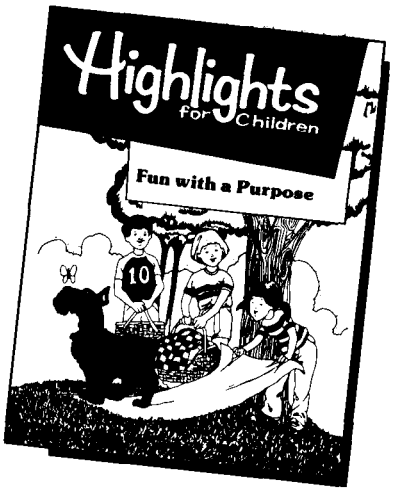

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escalation—as he did in the Bay of Pigs, in Laos, in the Berlin crisis of 1961, in the Cuban missile crisis, and as he surely would have done in Vietnam. He was always hopeful that differences could be rationally worked out, whether with Khrushchev or with Ross Barnett; force was the last resort, and only to be used with restraint and circumspection. He liked to quote a maxim of the British military strategist Liddell Hart: "Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes—so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-righteousness like the devil—nothing is so self-blinding."

HIS BRIEF DAYS in the White House were days of steady growth—growth in confidence, in understanding, and in purpose. He made mistakes but candidly acknowledged them and always learned from them. He knew the world was changing, and he had the courage and flexibility to adapt to change. It is impossible to predict what Presidents who died might have done had they lived; it is hard enough, heaven knows, to predict what living Presidents will do. Still, one can reasonably suppose that Kennedy, had he lived, would have reached his New Frontier in his second term with a strengthened mandate and a more cooperative Congress. If he had followed his own plan, he would have withdrawn American troops from Vietnam in 1965, instead of Americanizing the war that year as Johnson did. And had Kennedy lived, Khrushchev might well have stayed in power longer (Castro later told an American reporter that he thought Kennedy refrained from tightening the thumbscrew during the missile crisis "to save Khrushchev"); and the two men, who had stared down the nuclear abyss together in that tense October, might have taken the world a good deal farther along the road to disarmament and peace.

He never had the chance. But he had his impact. Did he fool us? I think not. The public man was no different from the private man. He had humor, incisive intelligence, courage—not just the courage of war but the quieter courage that enabled him to endure illness and agony without complaint; "at least one-half of the days he spent on this earth," his brother Robert once recalled, "were days of intense physical pain." He had confidence in human reason and hope for human nature. His commitment was to a sane, rational, and civilized world, and he believed such a world attainable. His contagious optimism gave his country the sense that, with sufficient ingenuity, steadfastness, and goodwill, we could meet our responsibilities. He was sure that there was a great reservoir of idealism, especially among the young, a selfless desire to help the poor and the powerless. He proposed to tap that idealism through undertakings like the Peace Corps abroad and a domestic peace corps (later realized in VISTA) at home. His directness and openness of mind, his faith in reasoned discussion, his ironic, often self-mocking wit, and his generous vision of American possibility broke the crust that had settled over the country in the 1950s. His irreverence toward conventional ideas and institutions provoked a discharge of critical energy throughout American society. He came to be loved in the black community and was the first President since F.D.R. with anything to say to the young. In other lands he was seen as a carrier of American idealism and a friend of humanity. For a moment he made politics seem in truth (in the phrase he cherished from John Buchan's *Pilgrim's Way*) "the greatest and most honorable adventure."

Why then the reaction against him? Fluctuations in the reputations of Presidents are entirely predictable. A low point generally comes in the period fifteen to twenty-five years after a President's death. When I was in college in the '30s, Theodore Roosevelt (d. 1919) was regarded as a blustering jingo and Woodrow Wilson (d. 1924) as a deluded fanatic. Roosevelt and Wilson stocks have long since recovered on the historical exchange. F.D.R. and Harry Truman had their periods of eclipse a short while back; now their stocks have recovered too. It is as if we swim for a moment in the hollow of the historical wave. Not until we reach the crest of the next wave can we look back and see with clarity what went before. If every hero becomes a bore at last, history eventually strikes a balance.

OUR POLITICS too flows in cycles. We have tides of action, passion, idealism, and reform that continue until the country is worn out. Then the tide goes out, and we enter into seasons of drift, quiescence, hedonism, and cynicism until our problems accumulate, our batteries recharge, and we are ready for a new surge ahead. We live today in a time of public apathy. We hate being reminded of nobler and more demanding days. We hate being nagged to think about the poor and the powerless. We hate the idea that we should not ask what our country can do for us but ask what we can do for our country. Because we cannot bear the challenge that John Kennedy embodied, we seek refuge in cynicism and sniggering gossip, dwelling on his failings in order to excuse our own failure.

But periods of irresponsibility do not go on forever. In this century it has been roughly a thirty-year cycle from one time of idealism to another: Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, John Kennedy in 1961, each releasing the generous energies of the people and initiating an epoch of social concern and progressive change. There is a generational aspect to this. Each activist President was the child of an earlier age of action. F.D.R. and Truman were young men when T.R. and Wilson stirred the country, as Kennedy and Johnson were young men when F.D.R. was in the White House. Kennedy's own commitment to politics as the greatest and most honorable adventure similarly touched and formed a generation of young men and women in the 1960s. They were moved by his aspirations and shaped by his ideals. That generation's time is still to come.

If the thirty-year rhythm holds—1901, 1933, 1961—the next epoch of forward movement should begin about 1988 or 1992. When that time comes, and come it will, John Kennedy, seen from the crest of the next wave, will assume his true proportions as a humane and creative political leader.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Globetrottings

On September 10 *The New York Times* ran a front-page story with the headline: 5 FILMS WITH POLITICAL STATEMENTS DUE IN FALL. To a filmgoer in New York, or any large city with access to foreign films, the headline couldn't make immediate sense: for that filmgoer, political content is common. But the story soon specified "Hollywood movies" that would deal with "highly charged issues," which seemed to justify the splash.

Under Fire
(Orion)

Educating Rita
(Columbia)

Experience Preferred . . . But Not Essential
(Samuel Goldwyn)

Three of the five have now appeared, and one of them is not a "Hollywood movie." The two to come are a "black comedy" about the arms trade and a film about Karen Silkwood, the Oklahoma laboratory technician who died mysteriously before she could testify on nuclear procedures. Of the three that have been released, I missed *The Final Option*, a British film about the 1980 seizure of the Iranian Embassy in London, but I saw the trailer and am not mourning my loss. *Hanna K.*, reviewed here four weeks ago, is contemptible, both as a piece of filmmaking and, whatever one's views, as a treatment of Israeli-Arab issues. And now I've seen *Under Fire*, which, according to the *Times*, is "likely to be" the "most controversial" of the five.

Sad, if true. Such controversy as the film entails is all by subsequent implication, and even that aftereffect is muffled by the film itself. On screen, we see an American photojournalist arrive in Nicaragua in 1979 just in time for the last Sandinista push that overthrows the Somoza government. He watches and photographs and, quite against his will, gets involved in the Sandinista movement. The major political actions in the film are not matters of controversy but of history. The Sandinistas did in fact topple the Somoza regime; the president did flee to Florida. Both sides are shown to commit random murders. Somoza is shown to be a tyrannical, oily liar. Is any of this debatable?

The only possible controversy attaches to our application of this film to the present. Certainly *Under Fire* is sympathetic to the Sandinista revolution and, by implication, asks the audience to continue that sympathy. But the real controversy today is not whether the Nicaraguan government is good but whether the United States has a right to give covert aid to the anti-Sandinistas. The Reagan view on the subject is known; but opposition to that view is hardly, in any really risky way, controversial. Reagan is opposed by, among others, Speaker Tip O'Neill and the editorial board of *The New York Times*. A picture that, by extension, agrees with the Speaker of the House and the *Times* can scarcely be called dangerously daring.

The one issue raised in the film is journalistic, not political. The rebel leader is killed, and the American photojournalist takes a picture of the dead man posed so that he looks as if he were still alive. If the leader were known to be dead, forthcoming American aid would not come forth. But even the hero's photo fakery is not a valid issue: the atmosphere of the rebel camp makes us feel that he is in danger if he refuses to take the picture, especially since he now knows the truth of the death. Does a news photographer's ethics require him to give his life for probity in such a situation? I hope not. (One tangential morbid note. The leader has been dead a couple of days, in a warm climate. Nothing has been done to preserve the body, yet there's no evidence of change.)

Later, the script balances ethical matters by having the photographer take pictures of a colleague's murder by a government soldier. The hero, though wounded, manages to escape the pursuing troops; gets the film into the right hands; and the pictures get on TV. (This too is puzzling since the TV is presumably still in Somoza's hands.) Next day, like many Movieland wounds, his wound has virtually healed, and he watches the rebels take over.

I might fear that I'd tipped too much of the plot except that the above is not central, it's background. The real plot is old foreign-correspondent stuff, two guys and a gal, rough and tough but with hearts of gold—a story that can be set anywhere. We see the casual heavy drinking, the coolness under fire, the tacit understandings—all hemstitched Hemingway. Nick Nolte lugs his increasingly potbellied hulk through the role of the photographer. Gene Hackman, ex-actor, seems faintly embarrassed, which is not enough, in the patchwork role of an older colleague who loses his girl to Nolte as he moves from the field to a TV anchorman job back home. Joanna Cassidy is the radio-correspondent object of their desires. Cassidy has a pleasant laugh, but many people have told her so, and now she laughs too much.

Roger Spottiswoode, the director, Augustin Ytuarte and Toby Rafelson,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Danton. Gerard Depardieu fiercely fine. The French Revolution too snugly tailored to symbolize Poland today, but Andrzej Wajda's best directing.

The Grey Fox. Western Canada, 1901. Who cares about the exploits of a courteous bandit in his sixties? Practically everyone who has seen this winning film.

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S.K.

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the art directors, are better than the script and the cast. The three of them have created a ravaged countryside with a brutalized citizenry. (The location shooting was done in Mexico.) But, as with *The Year of Living Dangerously*, which used Djakarta in 1965 as the background for *its* correspondents' romance, the look of *Under Fire* is the only authentic element in it.

So much for three-fifths of the explosion heralded in the *Times*. Onward and, possibly, upward.

TWO OTHER new pictures don't confront anything but old formulas, and they even do that in old-fashioned ways. *Educating Rita* is a British comedy about a young working-class wife who goes in for self-improvement via literature. As a part-time student, she encounters a professor who helps her, not quite intentionally, to alter her life. As a result of her change in mentality, she leaves her status-satisfied husband and begins to fulfill herself.

Rita has been compared, of course, with *Pygmalion*; it resembles the latter only in that the seemingly forecast romance between student and teacher does not happen. In Willy Russell's script, from a London theater hit, the teacher, unlike Henry Higgins, tries to persuade the student to remain as she is, to convince her that she is in reality better off than he is. The relationship is much more like the doctor-patient pair in *Equus* than like the pair in *Pygmalion*.

Michael Caine is the professor, a bit too sodden and too openly scornful of his subject for us to credit his job tenure, but Caine is difficult to dislike. Unfortunately, this is not true of Julie Walters, the young wife, or of anyone else in the cast. Formula pictures are comfortable, even comforting, if the people are likable. No one except Caine is engaging enough to make us enjoy tracing an old pattern.

Quite the opposite is true of *Experience Preferred . . . But Not Essential*, another British comedy of a young woman's rite of passage: every actor in it is right, good, engaging. This heroine is quite young, a dim, virginal student who, in 1962, gets a summer job as a waitress in a seaside hotel in Wales. At summer's end she goes back to school more confident and happy. The publicity tells us that the screenwriter, June Roberts, based the script on her own experiences twenty years earlier; the characters and plot knots do seem like

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eccentricities remembered affectionately, seen in retrospect as items in a small *Entwicklungsroman*.

Annie, the heroine, shares a room with an older waitress, initially hostile but later warm, who has recently spent six months recuperating in a mental hospital. Annie is visited by the harmless naked noctambulist homosexual barman; learns about life from two other waitresses who share the bed where one of them entertains her lover nightly; and so, nugget by nugget of experience, on. The main story is the perception of the real Annie, buried under shyness, by the thirtyish Scottish chef and how he helps her to discover herself.

No surprises, really, but none wanted. The relevant matters here are the chummy flavor of the dialogue and the appeal of the actors. The casting is perfect; Elizabeth Edmonds, as Annie, and Ron Bain, as the chef, charm as effortlessly as they are meant to do. The producer was David Puttnam, who engineered *Chariots of Fire* and has done a smaller-scale, equally precise job here. Peter Duffell directs sympathetically, the Welsh coast is seen enchantingly, and it all adds up to an eighty-minute refreshment.

PLYING A PERIPLUS

Hugging the Shore
by John Updike

(Knopf, 919 pp., $19.95)

John Updike has, on the evidence of his allusions, digressions, and entire frame of reference, read not only the mighty library of diverse books reviewed in *Hugging the Shore*, his third collection of critical pieces, but also just about everything of value there is to read. Compared to him, I have read almost nothing: only half the books he discusses here have I ever dipped into or read about, few consumed cover to cover, and only the merest handful actually reviewed. But perhaps what Lady Bracknell says about a man who desires to get married—that he should know either everything or nothing—extends also to the mating of books and their reviewers, and so, at least by my ignorance, I may qualify.

What kind of a critic is this renowned novelist? One, apparently, who takes to reviewing as a gentleman farmer, who really lives by something else, grows his alfalfa and lettuce. This third critical collection begins,

> Writing criticism is to writing fiction and poetry as hugging the shore is to sailing in the open sea. At sea, we have that beautiful blankness all around, a cold bright wind, and the occasional thrill of a gleaming dolphin-back or the synchronized leap of silverfish; hugging the shore, one can always come even closer to the land with another nine-point quotation.

An image derived from that most ancient mode of sailing, the periplus, which did not dare stick its prow into the great billows of risk and exhilaration, but, plodding close to land, got the job done. Is this, then, condescension to criticism from a fiction and verse writer? I doubt it, otherwise why a book of some nine hundred critical pages (containing, to be sure a few personal, noncritical essays and introductions to or interviews about one's own writings as well)? Or is it modesty vis-à-vis other writers? I doubt it, otherwise, again, why a book of such length from which nothing that Updike reviewed in the last eight years at *The New Yorker* seems to have been omitted?

Could the faintly patronizing passage be a form of conscious or unconscious honesty—a description of the sort of criticism Updike writes, which is, above all other things, safe? Here I must return to my landlubber trope: the gentleman farmer takes pride in his crops, but he can afford to grow what amuses him; hence my choice of alfalfa and lettuce was wrong. It should have been something more distinguished—Belgian endives or Spanish saffron. As the chief book critic for a magazine that adverts only to select items, Updike need review only his personal choices or works of presumptive merit respectfully submitted to him by the book review editor. Though some of these prove to be clinkers, they are tony clinkers susceptible of elegant, ironical deflation rather than requiring bloody and maculating dismemberment. So the reviews can, for the most part, afford to be genteel.

Yet is there anything wrong with being a genteel critic—with hugging the shore so as not to rock the boat overmuch? Not enormously. In fact, even during a periplus one can experience the odd gust of cold bright wind, the occasional whale or shark (never mind dolphins and silverfish) that strays close to land, and a beautiful blankness on three sides with a not unpleasing prospect of shore on the fourth, which is still a panorama worth considering. Indeed, criticism can be written just as imaginatively and imagistically as any other kind of prose, the very thing *Hugging the Shore* so winningly demonstrates. The effectiveness of Updike's muted critical tone is similar to the one our author defends in the French African fiction of Sembène Ousmane as having "that light, level accent . . . which voices its perceptions, however withering, with a certain pleasant dispassion, with a thinking man's articulations."

PERHAPS THE ONE real trouble with a periplus is that it takes longer than sailing straight across the sea. The principal problem with this tome is that there is too much of it. Updike is one of the rare and valuable critics who review a book as a piece of bookmaking as well, and nothing from paper not white enough to "a dust jacket that looks like butcher's paper," from the Schocken Kafka where "the print seems small and the price big" to the University of Chicago's *Carnival* by Isak Dinesen, which, among other good things, "sits holdably in the hand," escapes his aquiline notice. Yet despite his pious wish in the foreword to his previous such collection, *Picked-Up Pieces* ("Let us hope, for the sakes of artistic purity and paper conservation, that ten years from now the pieces to be picked up will make a smaller heap"), the current heap, amassed in only eight years, is by eight-elevenths bigger than the preceding one, twice as heavy, and unlikely to sit holdably in your hands unless they also pump iron. The situation could have been easily remedied by omitting the above-mentioned noncritical

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pieces and judiciously pruning the critical ones.

Still, there is so much of genuine worth scattered throughout that the stocking of our brains may well compensate for the strain on our muscles. *Hugging the Shore* reviews not only fiction by a host of writers from all continents except Antarctica, but also poetry, sociology, theology, criticism, history, art history, and even books by Doris Day and Louise Brooks, for both of which glamorous ladies our gallant critic tempers his strictures even more than usual. About the only thing Updike doesn't deal with here is the close competition—Mailer, Styron, et al.; but Vonnegut is here, overpraised as a less consequential rival would be by a gentlemanly fellow novelist for "the generosity of his imagination and the honesty of his pain" and "a fine disdain for the merely personal"—if only that were all that was being finely disdained! Updike is similarly overconsiderate of his *New Yorker* colleague Muriel Spark, in whose *The Takeover* "we have been ushered into the cave of an enchantress, and have there been dazzled, distracted, and peremptorily, as is befitting, dismissed." Nothing about being turned into pigs.

AN IMPRESSIVE aspect of Updike's criticism, however, is the generosity of spirit with which he tries—and often manages—to like and make likable writers quite unlike himself. Here he is on Céline: "A first-person narrator is a survivor, or he wouldn't be there on the page. This minor technical fact mutes the sense of death that Céline ostensibly evokes. . . ." On Henry Green: "A vision so clear can be withering; it takes great natural health to sustain a life without illusions." On Jean Rhys: "As a writer, she startles us with what it doesn't occur to her to overlook." On Borges (a bit ambiguously, to be sure): "Few major writers granted long life have proved so loyal to their initial obsessions and demonstrated so little fear of repeating themselves." And this, which goes beyond literary appreciation: "In the prize ring of life few of us would have lasted ten rounds with Colette."

He is equally good and honest at seeing the weaknesses of writers who so resemble him that he might easily have remained blind to their blind spots. Thus John O'Hara's art lacked "Love of language . . . language as a semi-

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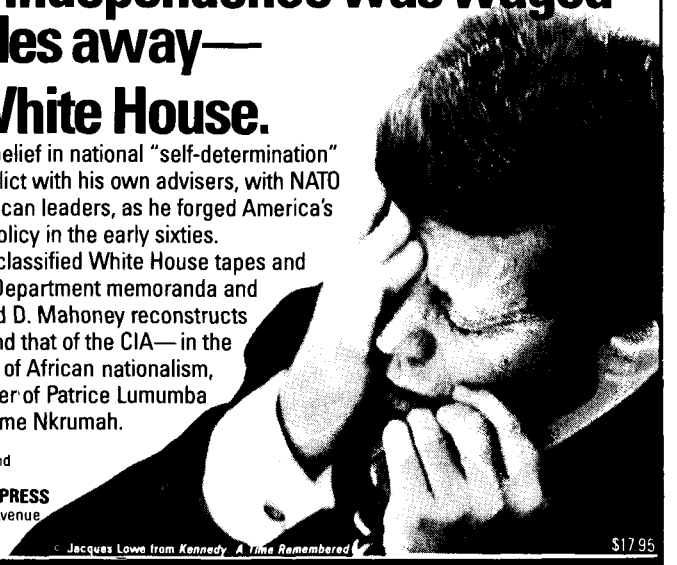

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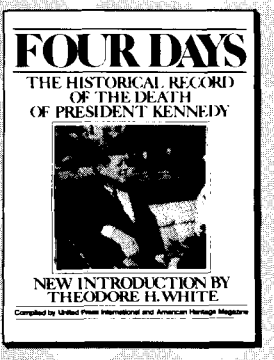

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opaque medium whose colors and connotations can be worked into a supernatural, supermimetic bliss." About late Bellow: "Literature can do with any amount of egoism; but the merest pinch of narcissism spoils the flavor." About late Flann O'Brien, whose former work Updike loved: "Each chapter makes a fresh grab at the greased pig of a plot. . . ." Concerning Bruno Bettelheim, whose interpretations of fairy tales he likes as much as he does fairy tales themselves: "While in the spell of this most benignly paternal scholar of our hearts, we forget that his own enchanting presumption of life as a potentially successful adventure may be itself *something of a fairy tale.*" And this shrewd comment on Italo Calvino's later work, despite high regard for the earlier: "Calvino contemplates the death not of the notorious old moribund Novel, but of the Story, of the hopeful impulse that makes beginnings and seeks outcomes and imagines adventures in the middle."

YET THE modern reader, bombarded with and often subdued by critical theories, may not be satisfied with such examples of good taste and twenty-twenty insight. What are the theoretical underpinnings of this criticism, he asks; what school does it belong to or might it serve to found? I am happy to report that it is purely gustatory criticism, and that Updike has much—and, for him, positively wicked—fun with the structuralists and semiologists. So in his review of *The Origin of Table Manners*, wherein he turns the tables on Claude Lévi-Strauss when he refers to it as "combining the 'raw' opacity of savage myths with the 'cooked' obscurity of close structural analysis. . . . The exact methodology [of the latter] is not easy to grasp, though Lévi-Strauss pauses every hundred pages or so to sing its praises." The entire review is exemplary, as when Updike notes that in reading Lévi-Strauss "one is witnessing a performance fundamentally artistic, less a pragmatic servicing of reality than the execution of a fiendishly difficult, self-imposed intelligence test."

It is rather disappointing, therefore, that though Updike begins by equally effectively putting in its place the earlier work of Roland Barthes, he later capitulates to the trend. Thus "*S/Z* is a nearly unreadable book about reading. . . . The reader emerges as from that machine of Kafka's which engraved commandments upon the transgressor's skin, lexically enriched but lacerated; I cannot remember another book ostensibly in the English language which gave me such pains to peruse." This is right on the nose, as are Updike's comments on another Barthes arcanum, *The Pleasure of the Text*. All that was in 1975, however; by 1976, Updike is more indulgent with *Sade/Fourier/Loyola*, and by 1980 he seems pretty much a deep imbiber from the Barthesian well. *New Critical Essays* is pronounced to be "serious and delightful in content," and this posthumous volume elevates Barthes irreplaceably above his disciples.

Why this sudden indulgence? Do semiologists, as Indians were once alleged to, become good only when they are dead? Is *New Critical Essays* better than previous Barthesiana? No; in fact, the pieces in it are old, and contain such seminally ludicrous statements as "This game is at the service of a very old technique, that of meaning." The answer lies in Updike's temperament or temperance, if not indeed in his curious, elusive, sometimes self-contradictory Christianity, which the author himself describes in this volume as "a helpful peripheral presence." Peripheral it may well be, but whether such Christian forbearance is actually helpful to a critic is an open question. I am not against understatement, such as this mildest of detergent ironies to which you can entrust the most delicate fabric of words (in this case, Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*): "Such a determined, doctrinal insubstantiality is, if not a defect, a virtue that takes some getting used to." Here at least we know where we stand; but when a wretched fiction of Robert Pinget's, *The Libera Me Domine*, is exonerated because "humane events . . . have a permanently unsettled shape once past the instant in which they occur," the ground underfoot becomes too shifty for the erection of stable criteria.

In his last Barthes review, Updike states his position: "An ingenious sympathy . . . uncovers more treasures than an impatient judgingness." Fine, except that a sympathy so ingenious as to leave all others far behind is apt to discover treasures so rarefied that they don't exist. Love of literature is certainly a tool without which a critic gets nowhere, but the love must not be divorced from a *patient* judgingness. A "wayward tenderness" such as Updike charmingly praises in the novelist R. K. Narayan is not the proper equipment for a critic, any more than is an overdose of Christian *caritas* that takes on a missionary zeal. What about an utter horror and nonentity such as William S. Burroughs, for whom Updike conjures up Christian excuses? "*Port of Saints* is claptrap, but since it is murderous claptrap we feel we owe it some respect." Already the other cheek is overextended, but there is worse: "Burroughs would be unbearable if he believed in death; but since he no more believes in finality than the id or the animator of Tom and Jerry cartoons, a St. Elmo's fire of perverse tenderness can be seen to play about his lurid tableaux. . . ." And, most amazing of all, "in a sense, *such bohemians [carry] forward under* a new banner the old Christian war of the soul against the body." We haven't seen such enforced mass conversions to Christianity since the Spaniards conquered South America.

IF UPDIKE has a critical program, however, it is a simple and sensible one. He wants, as a reader, to be "poked awake by a flash of beauty or crackle of truth"; he believes that some of the greatest writers produce "an autobiography transformed by the needs of art and a mysterious obligation to give the world back its glory." Of John McGahern, the Irish author, he remarks that he "writes well, and for the usual reasons: he observes well, hears faithfully, and feels keenly." Does this mean that Updike favors straight realistic fiction? Not to the exclusion of different modes, as witness his admiration for Pinget, Bruno Schulz (whom he allows, like Borges, to be "a cosmogonist without a theology"), much though not all of Beckett (not "the chop-logic of *Watt* and all the hopeless droning of *The Unnamable*"), Vonnegut, early and middle Calvino, most of Nabokov, García Márquez, and many more.

It is, however, true that when the antirealist mode combines with a certain cosmic bleakness and metaphysical pessimism, Updike may tune out. I think he includes himself more than banteringly in the following "we": "Novel readers are ruthlessly sentimental. We want characters to marry, out of our own needs to be done with them, to have them off our consciences." But is this the promised end of fiction? To take only one obvious example, does it apply to Proust, whom Updike rightly reveres? How eloquently he defends *A la Recherche* against Harold Pinter's pre-

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posterous screen adaptation:

> Pinter's characters are on the attack with every phrase, "at" each other, alert for advantage; Proust's dialogue is often an intersection of monologues, conveying with comic amplitude our deafness to one another amid the vanity of our pretensions and the lonely immensity of musing space we each of us harbor.

Now, that is multivalent, imaginative, golden rather than merely aureate criticism of the sort that can and must be read as writing first. Still, I for one find it regrettable that Updike the novelist and verse writer to some extent influences Updike the critic, so that writers such as Cheever, Bellow, Anne Tyler, Muriel Spark—sometimes even the utterly specious D. M. Thomas—benefit unduly; whereas others such as Milan Kundera, Günter Grass, Flannery O'Connor (whom he passingly equates with Carson McCullers!) are judged too severely, and still others converted to Christianity (the "Godly half" of Jean Rhys's writing) or simply defanged (W. H. Auden, "this sanest and most generous of modern poets").

YET IF a safely middle-of-the-road but often poetic realism is to be preconized, can we seriously demur if the argument is as sumptuous and stimulating as this:

> Every moment is, in a sense, a dealt hand. The combinations that the human mind invents are relatively facile and unmagical compared to reality's tumbling richness. Behind the artist's transformative sorcery lurks, like a sheepish apprentice, an irrational willingness to view the accidents of the actual as purposeful and the given as sacred. . . . Fiction has no reason to be embarrassed about telling the same story again and again, since we all, with infinite variations, live the same story.

And Updike is not really procrustean; I have nothing but wonderment for an intellectual curiosity and aesthetic catholicity that can not only find much to praise in, but also actually read through the works of writers as diverse as Stanislaw Lem and Ursula K. Le Guin on the one hand, and Paul Tillich and Karl Barth on the other.

Elegant and inveterately civilized as Updike's writing is, it is not, however, free from surprising lapses, some of which also implicate *The New Yorker's* nearly superhuman copyediting. Thus the word "smithy" is used as if synonymous with blacksmith, "regretful" as if meaning regrettable, "triune division" for what can be only tripartite division, and the inept neologism "polylingual" for either multilingual or polyglot. We get also a misplaced subjunctive in "I asked him if he were sure of this," and occasional unfortunate wordplay as in "less promptu get-togethers" and "this saucy spaghetti of ideas . . . seems in consumption as clear as consommé, and goes down like ice cream." There is a trio of whopping errors in German, an excessive eagerness to use "upon" where "on" would read and sound better, a seeming unawareness of the difference between idiot and cretin, and the by now extraordinary misspelling of Jean Genet as "Genêt." A sentence or two may not quite parse; more distressingly, there are instances of ludicrously mixed metaphor: "poems . . . that come out of the creator like toothpaste from a tube, generating their music of self-reflexive allusion as they flow along," and "I want to write books that are hard and curvy, like keys, and that unlock the traffic jam in everybody's head." But these lapses are all but forgiven when one confronts the sustained excellence with which Updike tackles such unlikely books for belletrists as Isaiah Berlin's *Vico and Herder* and Peter Gay's *Art and Act*, a work of art history.

The inevitable question we must finally ask is how does Updike's reviewing compare with that of Edmund Wilson—not so much because Wilson's alpenstock ("mantle" seems cumbersome for so intrepid and agile an explorer) at *The New Yorker* was handed down to Updike, as because every serious author of short journalistic criticism in America must be measured against that august touchstone. There has been no one yet to match Wilson's tireless venturesomeness, intellectual ubiquity, stylistic pungency and pugnacity, and that breathtaking jostling of idiosyncrasy and common sense that kept the reader, whether approvingly or disapprovingly, always agog. Yet Updike, in his more relaxed and only slightly less decathlonic fashion, does not trail far behind. Whether one holds his more celebrated fiction in low or high esteem, one cannot deny that his criticism enhances his stature as that rarest of American birds, the man of letters.

JOHN SIMON

John Simon is the author of *Something to Declare: Twelve Years of Films From Abroad* (Clarkson N. Potter).

"While looking for happiness and fulfillment, some of us find mountains."

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Eulogy To W. H. Auden

Assuredly, that runnelled face
is wincing deeply, and must loathe
our solemn rubbish,
frown on this canonizing farce
as self-enhancing, in lines both
devout and snobbish.

Yet, it may spare us who convene
against its wish in varnished pews
this autumn evening;
as maps remember countries, mien
defines a man, and his appears
at our beseeching.

Its granite features cracked and plain
as some ground in Giotto, is
fit for this chancel;
the wry mouth, bracketed with pain,
the lizard-eyes whose motto is:
Opposites Cancel.

The fissured cheeks would irrigate
with mineral salt the starved terrain
of the earth's races,
as small wings rise to contemplate
the field they love, its furrowed plain
conceals our praises;

and further throats will find delight
in all that left the body of
the mortal Auden
centuries after candle-lit
Kirchstetten freed its maker of
Time and its burden;

for what we cherish is as much
our own face, stricken with the light
of this strange calling;
and, once we leave this darkened church
and stand on pavements in the night
to see the falling

leaf like a seraph sign the arc
made by a streetlamp, and move on
to separate futures,
our footsteps echoing in the dark
streets, have, for their companion
his shadow with us.

His love, even a love of machines
in kitchens whose dials agree can
temper our horrors,
that reverence for small household scenes
that made him an American
East-Village Horace.

Autumn is when small wars begin
drunken offensives, our skies spin
with reeling scanners;
you, who left every feast at nine,
knew war, like loud verse, is a sign
of plain bad manners,

so now, when every dish deploys
from sonar peaks, some amplified
fireside oration,
we keep yours to ourselves, a voice
natural, but intricately wired,
calm and Horatian,

it swirls around our cenotaphs
like snow, like the dust it whispers,
and now, it dances
with its small light, evading graphs,
and how it comes and disappears
no system answers.

Further than any, your voice found
the range of our corrupted dream,
famine, invasion,
yet, in the scorched earth heard a sound
beneath the crust, a healing stream,
the source, the fountain.

II.

Pupil To Master: Sir, your elegies train us
that death is not the privilege of bores,
that even sad pastorals should entertain us
as you pluck off these compliments like burrs,
that there's delight in aping a great voice,
that the dead are our strictest editors.
With that astonishment that was a boy's
discovery of your language, there one was
in islands that were the antipodes
of English, Climate, History and Race,
searching the secret in those photographs
of a tow forelock on an equine face
bent to a lit match in a thriller's pose,
its messages the secret code of spies,
articles dropped, conspiring cable-ease.
Later, the weather in that cracking face
chose, like a saint, essential barrenness,
stones with a single spring, the voice didactic,
the vision bleaker, and the gaze as Arctic.
Pilot at first, then parson, then a grouse
ruffling at indecorum as you chose
scuffed, homiletic slippers to tight shoes.
All you had left was Order and its prayers,
a world controlled by Conduct, as it has
been since the insects; now great prose
entered our poetry, the sun-drunk bees
sucked the last drops of summer from the rose
of taxed, manorial England, but there was
in water-sheeted provinces of rice,
injustice wide as Asia. Refugees
crammed in your lines, the doomed cattle-cars
hurtling like stanzas into guilty echoes.
And as you watched them spread, the rusted lies
of wrecked machines, the civilised pretence
from stone gates to the barbed, electric fence,
your lines brought all in view, we heard the cries
in the crow's deflating caw, the dust that rose
from the abandoned furrows, then the eyes
marked by the crow's feet, till its scarps and scars,
its fells, our faults in suffering, enclosed
the modern map of our experience.

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III.

In your flat world of silence
the fissures made by speech
close. A sandpiper signs
the margin of a beach.

Far off, in rougher water,
where the surf breaks, it flies
like white scraps from a shredder,
like clouds of butterflies.

Soon, from the whistling tundras,
geese following earth's arc
will find their accurate Indies
in the lime-scented dark,

and swallows fixed like notes
at intervals on wires,
agree with tacit throats,
this world is as it was.

Our conjugations, Master,
are still based on the beat
of wings that give their cast to
a cuneiform alphabet

while shredders hum with rage through
the neon afternoon,
and dials guard earth's marriage
to a still barren moon;

but not kneeling Arcturus,
nor Saturn's visible hum
have, on our discs, a chorus
of epithalamium,

the more the space-craft flies on,
past its Newtonian shelf,
we hear that conversation
that man keeps with himself,

and, though you share a knowledge
whose silence seems unjust,
this age we have named your age,
your voice is what we trust.

Once, past a wooden vestry,
down still, colonial streets,
the lifted hymns of Wesley,
were cords of miners' throats;

their faith was calm as timber,
as unadorned as wood,
their truth, as I remember,
more sensed than understood;

in treachery or in union
despite an Empire's wrong,
I made my first communion
there, with the English tongue.

It was such dispossession
that made possession joy,
when, strict as Psalm and Lesson,
I learnt your poetry.

IV.

Twilight, and pigeons batten
down on St. Mark's. A face
startles us with its pattern
of sunlit fire-escapes,

a slippered shadow pities
those railings where it moves,
brightening with Nunc Dimittis
this city it still loves.

O craft, that strangely chooses
one mouth to speak for all,
O Light, no dark refuses,
O Space, impenetrable,

fix among constellations
the spark we honour here,
whose planetary patience
repeats his earthly prayer,

that the City may be Just,
that humankind be kind.
A barge moves, caked with rust
in the East River wind,

and the mouths of all the rivers
are still, and their estuaries
shine with the wake that gives the
craftsman the craft of peace.

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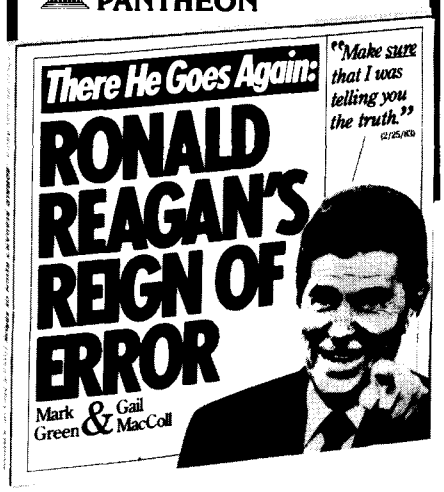

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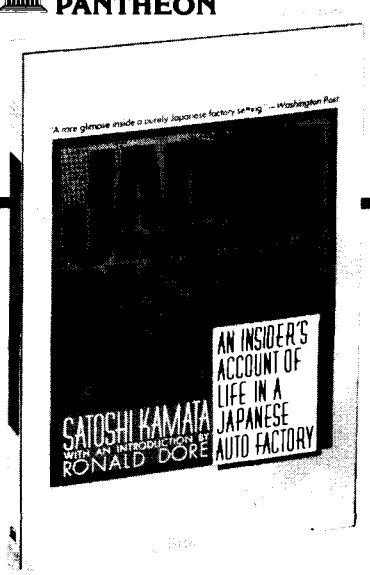

THE HUMAN FACTOR

The Economics and Politics of Race: An International Perspective by Thomas Sowell

(William Morrow, 324 pp., $15.95)

Thomas Sowell, originally an historian of economic thought, has in recent years brought out book after book on the differences among American racial and ethnic groups: *Race and Economics* (1975), *American Ethnic Groups* (1978), *Ethnic America* (1981), *Markets and Minorities* (1981) and now *The Economics and Politics of Race*, in which he reaches out beyond the borders of the United States.

There are three surprising features to these books. First, Sowell presents the facts straightforwardly and without embarrassment. This is astonishing, and brave. Few of us, white or black, have been able to do this. Some of the facts as to differences (to get to the key issue) between blacks and other racial and ethnic groups in the United States in educational achievement, or arrest rates, or family breakup, or illegitimacy, are so startling that even scholars (indeed, often particularly scholars), will fudge the facts, explaining that there's something wrong with the data, or this proves how much discrimination there still is, or how racist white scholars are. There is only one kind of difference that is allowed to stand as the crude data gives it, the difference in family income between whites and blacks, and this is presented as evidence of the enormous effect of current discrimination.

Which brings us to Sowell's second point of distinction: he analyzes the differences in ways which introduce real insight into their character and meaning. First, he breaks up the mass of white Americans and black Americans into meaningful subgroups which demonstrate that both the "white" and the "black" characteristics are in large measure illusions of averaging. Among whites there are those who have done very well and those who have not done particularly better than blacks. And among blacks, he has shown there are subgroups—West Indian blacks and their descendants, for example, who have done better than some groups of whites. But this is only a first element in his analytical strategy, for by complicating the facts he sharply raises the question of why the differences exist, and the key explanatory variable which dominates the discussion of these differences—discrimination—simply disappears for the most part as any effective *current* explanation.

Neither the first distinction nor the second is calculated to win him friends among black leaders, black scholars, civil rights activists, white liberal scholars, and the like. His frankness on the facts raises embarrassing questions; his analyses undermine their favored approach in dealing with these matters, namely a more extended and intense governmental attack on discrimination.

And Sowell's third feature leads to nothing short of speechlessness among his opponents: he is a totally committed free-market liberal economist, convinced that hardly anything government will do can help blacks and other minorities with high levels of poverty and low levels of educational and economic achievement, and that almost anything government will do will only make matters worse. His last book but one, *Markets and Minorities*, was introduced by Milton Friedman. Still, one has the impression that increasingly he is heeded, that this unbending analyst is having a greater influence on the discussion of matters of race and ethnicity than any other writer of the past ten years. Reluctantly, even black leaders and civil rights activists seem to be coming to the conclusion that more resources from government in the fight against discrimination (leave aside the fact that they are not forthcoming) will do little to affect high rates of illegitimacy, low rates of educational achievement, low rates of participation in the labor force, and other ills of a substantial part of the black minority.

In this latest book, Sowell examines the experience of some groups that have migrated freely, and others subject to forced emigration through slav-

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ery, in a variety of countries: the Chinese in Southeast Asia and in the United States; Germans, Irish, Italians, and Jews in a variety of countries into which they have migrated, from Australia and Latin America to the United States; and black and colored peoples in the Caribbean, South Africa, and the United States. The style is familiar from his other books—a rapid piling up of facts from a variety of secondary sources and census statistics (257 pages of text, against 54 pages of footnote reference). Some of his facts may be challenged, but the accumulation makes his point and it is consistent with general knowledge. The point, again and again, is that groups have made their way—or not made their way—independently of government and political power, and on the basis of their human resources, which are accounted for by their distinctive histories. Government has enslaved them or held them down; they have risen by their own efforts. The corollary is that human resources are infinitely more important than degrees of discrimination. Groups that have suffered intense discrimination and persecution (the Chinese in most Southeast Asian countries, Jews in many countries) rise again and again, while those who have managed to gain early political power (such as the Irish, whose economic rise in this country was slow) have not necessarily done as well, because they lacked the necessary human capital.

IN THE SECOND half of the book, titled "Analysis," these points are developed at length, again with great reference to specifics, and are filled out with a discussion of the prospects for the third world. Sowell's lesson is that while "discrimination has been pervasive," it has not been "pervasively effective." One must recognize "that economic performance differences are quite real and quite large. Simple and obvious as this point may seem, it goes counter to many prevailing approaches, doctrines, and conclusions." Sowell insists on telling the truth. But he goes a good part of the way toward explaining it. While as with almost any discussion of differences among ethnic and racial groups—differences that seem to crop up again and again in the most unlikely circumstances—we seem to come up against the mystery of differences of "culture," grounded in a distant past, historical experiences, family and com-

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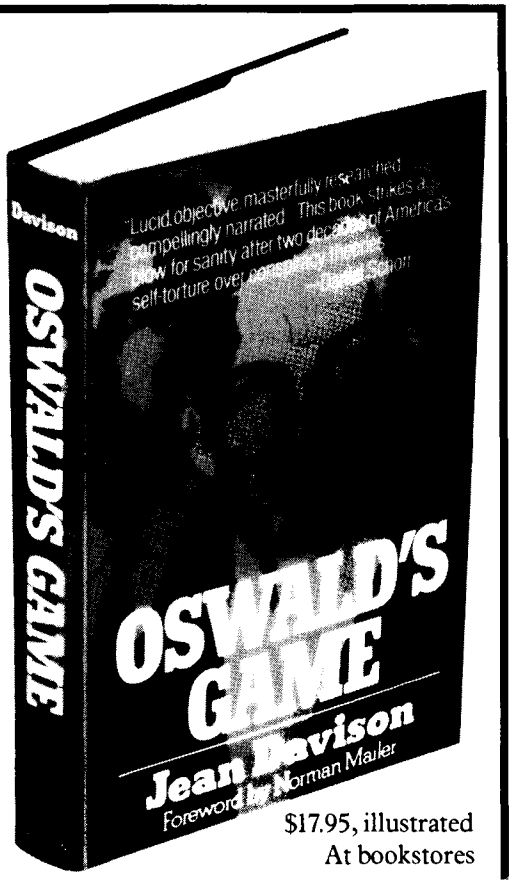
Foreword by
Norman Mailer



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munity adaptations, and the like, Sowell is sometimes able to strip away some of the mystery through analysis. For example, it turns out, if we want to explain why Jews and Chinese and Germans have done well in so many settings, that migrants almost *always* do better than the native born of their own group in the country to which they have migrated! Migration seems to select the more energetic; Barry Chiswick's research shows that migrants regularly surpass the income of native-born members of their group already in America.

> Foreign-born black males overtake native black males after 11 years and foreign-born white males overtake native white males after 13 years. Male emigrants from the Philippines take 13 years to overtake native-born Filipino Americans, . . . males from Mexico . . . [take] 15 years, Japanese male emigrants 18 years. . . , white Cuban male refugees take 18 years. . . .

And thus the dilemma of developing countries. Migrants bring new and necessary skills to the country, which is why they do well. Inevitably, they rise above the native population—to be attacked as exploiters, a term which can be given no precise meaning, but which serves to inflame natives against migrants, and so massacres and expulsions which mean not only death and hardship to the migrants, but economic decline for the natives. We see the power of economic analysis in Sowell's explanation of this recurrent phenomenon:

> A nation of peasant farmers—whether in Eastern Europe or in Southeast Asia—can benefit from the addition of a group of organizers of markets for their crops and sellers of miscellaneous manufactured goods used by peasant families. By the same token, groups like the Jews in Europe and the overseas Chinese in Asia obviously found it to their advantage to migrate to places where they could perform these functions. But from a political perspective, the more desperately needed these middlemen were, and the more valuable their contributions to the economy, the greater the disparity in income between them and the peasant masses—and the more they were hated as "exploiters."

Sowell, we must point out, is not speaking of rulers of colonies. He is speaking of the Chinese and Indians who themselves wielded no political power, but who came because colonialism introduced economic opportunities, brought peace, opened borders. A free-market economist, he is of course a critic of interference in the operations of the market, and thus a critic of colonialism as well as of the politically motivated economic interventions of a democratic state. But what impresses him is how ineffective colonialism has been in affecting the economic fate of various subgroups that came under its power. He is silent as to how the colonizing nations might have benefited from colonialization, an issue that is much alive in developing countries. But in the current post-colonial situation, in which these countries are independent, he sees no such exploitation.

Sowell gives no quarter to the argument, so often heard in the developing world, that either the effective immigrants or the multinational corporations are exercising an undue power: "The 'power' of moneylenders (such as the Jews in Europe or the Chinese in Southeast Asia) has often consisted of nothing more than a willingness to lend at high interest rates to people to whom others would not have lent at any interest rate. . . ." As for the multinationals, said to have great "power" in third world countries, "in fact they are reducing no one's options, but often increasing them."

But there is then the political problem: What third world leader would educate his people to benefits that migrants or multinational corporations bring, what minority leader would straightforwardly insist that the path to progress in a country in which discrimination is illegal and opportunity is open is to invest in those human resources which history and analysis show are necessary for economic productivity? It is hardly likely that many in third world countries will read Sowell's demolition of the argument that "imperialism" and "exploitation" are responsible for the backwardness of poor nations. If they did, they might still prefer excluding what they consider foreign economic agents, and accepting a lower level of economic welfare that the native group manages by itself and for itself. In the American debate on these issues, however, one senses that Sowell's brave and reasoned analysis is having an impact.

NATHAN GLAZER

Nathan Glazer's most recent book is *Ethnic Dilemmas 1964-1982* (Harvard University Press).

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NOT WITH A BANG

A Minor Apocalypse
by Tadeusz Konwicki
translated by Richard Lourie

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 232 pp., $16.95)

A Minor Apocalypse is one of the most powerful, artistically accomplished, and gloomy literary reports to come recently from the twilight zone of Eastern Europe. It is also a cryptic testimony whose real message is buried in the sequence of bizarre events, symbolic characters, and confused internal monologues of the main hero, the narrator who is endowed with the author's own name, appearance, and memory.

Tadeusz Konwicki was born in 1926 near Wilno in what was then Polish Lithuania. He grew up in a country still engulfed in the pastoral past, whose folklore and collective memory reached back to the Middle Ages. Like his older countryman, Czeslaw Milosz, whose autobiographical novel, *The Issa Valley*, he managed to film shortly before the declaration of martial law in Poland, he inherited an acute sense of historical destiny, a belief in the magical power of national dreams, and a taste for visionary realism. In his early youth he fought in a guerrilla unit of the Home Army against Soviet troops, which took over Wilno after chasing out the Germans. Later, when Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union, he moved to Poland and finally settled in Warsaw.

Despite his anticommunist past, Konwicki followed the same path as many in his generation in trying to reconcile himself with the new regime. He even became a member of a group of young literary enthusiasts called "the pimpled ones." His first stories and articles exalted the heroic workers involved in the "construction of socialism," and his first published novel, *Power* (1954), followed the official model of Socialist Realism. Like the majority of his contemporaries, however, he was soon disillusioned. As a writer, he decided to follow his own vision—more personal and much more complex—of the times he had witnessed. In 1963 he published *A Dreambook for Our Time*, a novel that established his literary reputation in Poland. It is a story of a man mysteriously saved from death, who then escapes into death at the end of the book—a pattern that would recur more than once in his later fiction. Konwicki's last three books, the novels *The Polish Complex* (1977), and *A Minor Apocalypse* (1979), as well as a literary journal, *Moonrises, Moonsets* (1982), were published outside the reach of state censorship by the independent and clandestine Polish literary magazine *Zapis*.

A Minor Apocalypse is a futuristic yet strikingly familiar fantasy. The place is unmistakably Warsaw; the time, some indefinite future, although we are allowed to guess that we are well beyond 1984. The world is falling apart both physically and morally. Houses and bridges collapse, shops are empty, money loses value, cars run on buttermilk. Even time deteriorates. There are no calendars, so nobody can tell the date. Seasons of the year blur and merge. Life is a grotesque, sometimes hilarious, yet always terrifying spectacle of decay and degradation. The process evidently has been a long and gradual one, since nobody seems to notice or care. In fact, people have adapted to their subhuman condition pretty well. Even a diminishing group of "dissidents," disillusioned about their activities, manipulated and corrupted by the regime, provides little hope for the future.

This is the background against which the protagonist-narrator Konwicki wakes up in the morning with an unearned hangover (he had not been drinking the previous night) and is suddenly visited by two old friends, Hubert and Rysio, who demand that at eight o'clock that very night he burn himself alive in front of Central Party Headquarters. Precisely at that hour Poland will cease to be. It will join the Soviet Union as yet another republic. Konwicki's task is to make "the elevated, the majestic, the holy" gesture to shake people in Poland and elsewhere. The two messengers explain that he, Konwicki, is the only person suitable for such sacrifice. He is a known writer,

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whose death will cause some stir, yet not important enough to be a significant loss to Polish culture. Besides, his private obsession with death, clearly visible in his fiction, makes him a perfect candidate for a heroic suicide.

Konwicki rejects the proposition as senseless and cynical, although he takes it seriously. He leaves his house with an intention of sneaking out of his assignment at the last moment. Yet he is immediately caught in a web of strange events that seems to push him relentlessly toward his fate. It looks as if his steps follow some hidden pattern outlined by agents more powerful than himself and his morning visitors. His apparently aimless peregrinations along the dilapidated streets of Warsaw become stages of a personal Golgotha and a ritual of reckoning prior to the nation's apocalypse. Similarly, his internal monologue, in which he tries to negate the sense of any sacrifice in a world like his, paradoxically becomes the justification of that sacrifice. In the last scene of the book we see him, still with a hangover, climbing the steps of the Palace of Culture (since the place of *auto-da-fé* has been changed) with a can of gasoline and a box of Swedish matches provided scrupulously by his friends.

When the novel was first published in Poland, it was met with bewilderment and more than a few voices of opposition. *A Minor Apocalypse* is a roman à clef portraying, in a thinly veiled way, well-known figures from the official as well as the "underground" culture and politics. Many people took personal offense. Konwicki seems determined to settle accounts with just about everybody: the Russians, the West, the government, the opposition, the intellectuals, the artists, and his own countrymen in general. Konwicki's fantasy was interpreted as a report on the present state of things. As such it was obviously too negative and one-sided. Some critics pointed to his lack of understanding of the real political mechanisms and his underestimation of the power and the determination of Polish workers—objections that were suddenly confirmed by the popular protest of 1980 which transformed the apathetic society.

But such an approach to the author of *A Minor Apocalypse* misses the point. Konwicki is not a political writer. He is an explorer of the subconscious, though the subconscious in a special, collective sense. He is interested in the subjective reality of a people crippled by their historical fate, banished from the world of normal social pursuits and achievements into the domain of dreams, myths, and futile expectations. Using his own biography and the experience of his generation, he watches how Poles create, transform, and destroy their symbols, how they change their weaknesses into strengths, and their strengths into weaknesses. The characters that appear in his novels are real people, as well as phantoms from the narrator's past and emblematic figures from the Polish collective consciousness. "The boy from the provinces" who accompanies the protagonist, and who turns out to be a police informer, may also be the author's alter ego (his name is also Tadeusz) or his lost youth. The famous writer and Konwicki's master, Jan, who almost reached Parnassus, and now is drinking himself to death in his Warsaw apartment, represents the Polish striving to be admitted to the family of great European cultures. There is also a paralyzed soldier of the Home Army, a survivor of the great war, who watches the disintegration of his country on a TV screen, and a mysterious Russian girl, Nadezhda, who stands for Poland's secret fascination with her neighbor and oppressor.

History in this world is experienced as a repeated disaster or a continuous ending. Konwicki's heroes see their universe evaporating into nothingness, and they in turn are forced out of the familiar domains. By placing his story in an indefinite future, where time has almost ceased to exist, Konwicki captures this repetitive character of the Polish drama, giving us not Poland in a particular moment but a summa of Polish history. What we see is happening right now, has happened before, and will happen again. History confirmed Konwicki's predictions when the military crackdown of December 1981 destroyed all hopes for a major political breakthrough.

Yet there is something much more ominous and terminal in the world of *A Minor Apocalypse*. The novel is also a vision of totalitarianism in the final stage of its decay, which may be, as the author seems to suggest, its final and permanent accomplishment. The most terrifying aspect of this kind of totalitarianism is its almost absolute transparency—"slavery covered by a sloppy coat of contemporary polish," as Konwicki's hero remarks. Those who insist on measuring oppression by the number of political prisoners, the degree of police coercion, and the effectiveness of government control, would find there little reason for indignation. True, there is poverty and corruption of grotesque proportions, yet they are hardly restricted to the totalitarian world. There is also the secret police, which tortures the main hero in a highly inventive and sophisticated way. Still, it looks almost like a relic from the good old days of real struggle and sharp divisions between "us" and "them." The regime itself has grown senile and weak. Its functions have become merely ritualistic. People are mostly left alone, allowed to pursue their petty ambitions. Watched from some safe distant place, they may seem almost free. They make money, have good times, sign petitions and protests; like Rysio, they even write plotless allegorical novels that use neither punctuation nor dialogue. Yet they are slaves, and their slavery has an utterly unprecedented dimension. There is a lot of movement in their world, yet there is no progress. The slavery in Konwicki's novel results from the fact that some great, universal dream of adventure and perfection that has accompanied humanity throughout its history, has irreversibly ended.

The secret power of totalitarianism, Konwicki tells us, is its tremendous inertia, which is released by some historical mistake, and which drives the system to its grim conclusion. Its ultimate result may be the death of history itself, the living death of the world that nobody notices. "This city is the capital of a people evaporating into nothingness. Something needs to be said about that, too. But to whom?"

The world has gotten used to much more spectacular visions of the apocalypse, and Konwicki, like so many writers from the communist world, warns us that the true apocalypse comes in the form of " . . . an Antichrist diluted, broken into bits and granules," which can be easily overlooked. *A Minor Apocalypse* is clearly an exercise in extreme

COMING:
Roger Shattuck
on Stravinsky.

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pessimism, but even Konwicki stops short of total hopelessness. When the crippled soldier of the Home Army points to the dying world, the narrator suddenly disagrees:

> "The world can't die. Many generations have thought that the world was dying. But it was only their world which was dying."
> "Well said. But if the world isn't dying, then you have to live somehow."
> "What does that mean?"
> "That means you need to have a human death."

Konwicki's protagonist clings to the belief in the immortality of the world, and this belief makes him accept his own, seemingly absurd death as the only human conclusion of the day of humiliations and reckonings. Yet is he merely dying along with *his* world, Poland, which he has known and which is to be no more, or is his death a real act of sacrifice meant to redeem and save some value for the future? The hero with his irony and taste for dialectical negations and counternegations does not have a clear answer. He climbs to his stake as confused and doubting as when he left home in the morning. Yet his act assumes a larger meaning. The ultimate goal of slavery is to deprive the slave of his subjectivity, make him dissolve in the self of the master. The same can be said about totalitarianism, even though, as Konwicki argues, it is a slavery without a personal master. Every rebellion of a slave, even a hopeless and self-destructive one, is a confirmation of the slave's will to maintain his separate personality. It binds the master and deters his final victory.

A Minor Apocalypse is more evidence that the independent writing from Eastern Europe is taking its place in contemporary world literature. History—cruel to the people who write it—graced it with a subject that Western writers seem to be seeking in vain. Paradoxically it is there, in the oppressive and claustrophobic world, that basic values and ideas of human destiny are undergoing the most thorough examination. If only for that reason, voices like Konwicki's, or Kundera's, or Konrad's, should be listened to today with special attention.

JAROSLAW ANDERS

Jaroslaw Anders is a Polish writer living in New York. He is a fellow at the New York Institute for the Humanities.

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A Salvadoran Writer

One Day of Life
by Manlio Argueta

(Aventura/Vintage, 160 pp., $6.95)

In a one-room building behind the archbishop's offices in San Salvador there are high-piled stacks of depositions recording what is known about the last hours in the lives of thousands of people lost to El Salvador over the last four years. There is almost always some desperate woman or old man seated in a folding chair before a metal desk recounting to a clerk the disappearance of a son or daughter. They speak in the stunned and stumbling voices of peasants; of survivors. They pray for help to find their relatives alive or, at least, somewhere among the forty-five thousand dead, and then they leave and their stories go into the vast files.

There are a lot of visitors to this unofficial Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, particularly North Americans. It's a convenient place to stop on a morning tour of the nation's troubles. The U.S. Embassy is just up the street, the morgue is around the corner. If the visitors read Spanish they may leaf through a long report on torture or an eyewitness account of the latest government atrocity. More often they stand to one side in the crowded office looking at the collection of photographs in cheap albums originally compiled to help families find and identify their dead, but now used as well for broader propaganda purposes: page after page of cadavers in various states of decomposition and disrepair. U.S. Congressmen have seen those binders, even photographed the photographs to take home to their committees. Authors and columnists and a wide array of concerned "gringo" lawyers, actors, doctors, and indefatigable Op-Ed writers have browsed through these plastic and pasteboard Books of the Dead gritting their teeth at the nauseating carnage captured in glossy black-and-white prints.

At its best, *One Day of Life*, a novel by exiled Salvadoran author Manlio Argueta, reads as if it were written from those files and drawn from those grisly images. As he tells the story of Guadalupe Fuentes and her family's quotidian ordeals in mountainous Chalatenango province the peasant voices are real with the woefulness and the sheer determination to survive that pervades the Salvadoran countryside. The matter-of-factness of horror is there:

> It was better to deceive her and tell her that Justino was badly wounded; but the truth had already spread, what they had done to Justino was something terrible: his body was found in one place and his head in another, stuck on a road marker.
>
> And early in the morning, when people were going to work, that is, around six, they could see a ball elevated on a post, well, who could think it had anything to do with a human being, in spite of so much current barbarity.

When it works, this book does what virtually no other volume or newspaper story or television report in the United States has even begun to do. It renders the Salvadoran peasant visible. Until now, despite more than two years of intense coverage, the poor have never emerged from that blood-drenched landscape to confront an American audience, except as corpses or mourners or, for a day, voters. In *One Day of Life* they are presented, at last, as something more than political ciphers.

The ambience of rural poverty—the pervasiveness of the violence, the intimate presence of a repressive system that feeds on the violence—is drawn in telling detail:

> . . . the Guard started appearing in our neighborhood, and when we saw them we'd spread the word and have to watch out, because the Guard is very strict, you can't walk around, for example, with a machete strapped to your wrist because for sure you'd get an ass-whipping or would be fined more than any poor person could ever pay.
>
> The Guard would say that it wasn't necessary to carry machetes around all the time; but since men are accustomed not to part with their machetes, it's hard to convince them that when they're not working it's unnecessary to carry them. They feel abandoned without their machetes; it's a necessary companion. The thing is, sometimes there are mishaps, especially on Sundays when they drink too much rum. That's why the Guard is so severe and doesn't fool around when it comes to taking a machete away from even the toughest guy with a few good kicks in the ass. "If you walk around with your machete tied to your wrist, we're going to chop off your hand." And they mean business.

In this and a few other passages Argueta and his translator, Bill Brow, manage to capture exactly the tone of the peasant's voice, the complex, often ambiguous texture of his experience.

And yet there is a great deal about this book, alas, that is so obvious, so banal, so plainly bad as literature and so potentially misleading as politics and sociology, that one hesitates to praise it at all. It is a painfully awkward work that teeters somewhere between art and polemic, truth and lies. It calls itself a novel, but its roots are in propaganda. In much of its intellectual dishonesty, unfortunately, Argueta's book is reminiscent once again of what is to be found at the unofficial Human Rights Commission: the tendency to turn your opponents into demons and your allies into angels, which is endemic to Salvadoran society and nowhere more evident than on the left.

YOU MIGHT EXPECT that with so much real horror at hand the opposition would see no need to report more than the objective truth about what is going on. But reality, as damning as it might be, is somehow never quite adequate to the propagandist's purpose. No one killed is ever so much as a leftist sympathizer, much less a guerrilla. A page or two of the grisly photo albums is devoted, for instance, to the blown-away faces of youths who died in the San Antonio Abad slum last year during the elections. Nowhere does the commission note that they were guerrilla combatants carrying guns when they walked into a government ambush, an event witnessed by several reporters and recorded on videotape. The long torture report jibes with the story of virtually every survivor of the suffering inflicted by the National Police. But its anonymous author feels compelled for some reason to recount extended verbatim conversations among the torturers to prove they are not only sadistic goons, but homosexual sadistic goons.

In like manner, Argueta is at his worst when he attempts to adopt the voice of a common soldier in El Salvador's *Guardia Nacional*, the agent of repression. He does catch accurately the way soldiers are taught to think of

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themselves as a separate class. ("The thing is, all civilians are shit, brother, you're no exception. They envy our uniforms, the fact that we've gotten ahead in life.") But Argueta cannot resist the kind of arch twist that seems designed to win cheap nods of approval from the left's true believers:

> . . . the Chinese man teaches the martial arts, even how you gouge someone's eye with your thumb. And another class called psychology, which is to say, how you can make people suffer by the mere use of words, because you know it isn't always necessary to use force, often there are people who understand only words. This science of psychology has something to do with electric apparatuses.

Moreover, while its American publishers (who have made it the first volume in a new trade paperback "library of contemporary world literature") are selling *One Day of Life* with the line that it is "as timely a novel as there could ever be about the present turmoil in El Salvador," it is already very much a work of the past. It depicts a time four or five years ago when it was much easier to define the good, the bad, and the ugly in El Salvador without so much as mentioning where the guerrillas might fit into that spectrum. Chalatenango, the setting for the novel, was and is the stronghold of the most radical communist faction in the guerrilla front, the late Salvador Cayetano Carpio's Popular Liberation Forces (F.P.L.). But there are no rebels to be seen in Argueta's book. There is only talk about the Christian Federation, known in El Salvador as FECCAS, and there are some revolutionary priests. There is no suggestion of how the Christian Federation was involved with the F.P.L.'s "mass organization." There is no hint of how the federation was manipulated by Cayetano Carpio's people even as its members were being systematically slaughtered by the old military dictatorship.

Argueta's interest presumably is in showing why a revolution is needed in El Salvador, not in suggesting the sometimes sordid and cynical mechanics employed to bring it about, even if they are a vital part of the lives and deaths his characters would encounter in the scene he has set. I do not mean for a moment to lose sight of the evils committed in the past and still being committed by members of the government Washington backs in El Salvador. "Unfortunately the truth about atroc-

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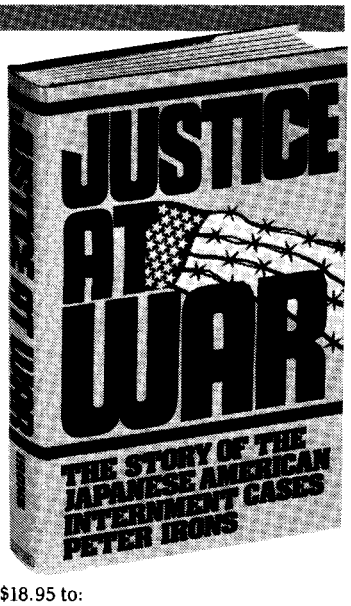

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ities is far worse than that they are lied about and made into propaganda," George Orwell wrote more than forty years ago. "The truth is that they happen." But to understand the true horror of those atrocities and, most importantly, to search for some way to bring them to an end, it is important to know propaganda when you see it—whether at the Human Rights Commission, or in a White House press release, or in this novel.

Caught between the repression of the U.S.-backed military and the cynical dogmas of the rebel armies, about all the Salvadoran people can depend on these days to set them free is, in fact, the truth. *One Day of Life*, for all its promise, and all the promises made for it, carries us only a very little way closer to finding out what that may be.

CHRISTOPHER DICKEY

Christopher Dickey just ended a three-and-a-half year tour as Mexico and Central America Bureau Chief for *The Washington Post*.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 4*

DEFENDING NEWSLETTERS

To the editors:

In "Newsletter Nostrums" (TNR, October 10), Daniel Nossiter shows the way his mind works as he surveys the sensational publications but omits spending time and space on the many serious and dedicated newsletters that provide a service to their industries by including information that never appears in trade publications, but keeps industry members abreast of developments. These newsletters thrive not on sensationalism, as Nossiter says, but on the facts.

JERRY STEINMAN
Beer Marketer's Insights
West Nyack, New York

EASTERBROOK REPLIES

To the editors:

Three points regarding the letter from John Ullmann of Investigative Reporters and Editors (TNR, October 3); objecting to my references to I.R.E. in an earlier article ("St. Louis Diarist," August 8).

First, I.R.E. did not "pay [my] way and [my] expenses" to its St. Louis meeting, as Ullmann claims. My employer, *The Atlantic*, paid for both. I.R.E. provided only a room and breakfast—which, I understand, it did for all its award winners. I paid for the baseball game from my own pocket.

Second, Ullmann protests my ribbing I.R.E. for once having met in a "luxurious" hotel, saying the hotel was only a Holiday Inn. He neglects to add that it was the Holiday Inn Embarcadero, a shiny new convention tower on premium land by San Diego's harbor. It seemed pretty ritzy to me; maybe Ullmann has higher standards for hotels.

Finally he complains that I.R.E.'s justly famous Arizona Project was not "an investigation into the mob murder of reporter Don Bolles," as I said, but strictly "a 23-part series on organized crime in the state." True, I.R.E. did not search for Bolles's killer. That was properly left to law enforcement agencies. But the team went to Arizona specifically in response to the murder; tried to complete Bolles's life work by following his unfinished leads; and openly billed the series as a "memorial" to him. Ullmann thinks the distinction "more than subtle"; I disagree. At any rate it seems less than subtle to leave the impression, as he did, that Bolles's death and the Arizona investigation were unrelated.

GREGG EASTERBROOK
Washington, D.C.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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TRB, *from page 6*

threatens) that physicians will refuse to take Medicare patients under these terms, but that's a bluff. Few doctors would blithely abandon what has become a major source of patients and income. The A.M.A. asks: "Is the federal government now going to pay 1983 prices to all suppliers in 1984?" Freezing doctors without freezing other "suppliers," says the doctors' union, is "unfair." But what other suppliers get to charge the government whatever they wish? Even defense contractors have to submit the occasional competitive bid. Until doctors stop bidding for the business, Medicare rates are not too low.

"In creating the Medicare and Medicaid programs in 1965," the A.M.A. lectured a congressional committee recently, "Congress committed itself and the nation to providing access to high quality care for the elderly and the needy." This concern for the have-nots is touching, but recent. In 1965 the A.M.A. hired a prominent actor to make a record entitled "Ronald Reagan Speaks Out Against Socialized Medicine." The A.M.A. women's auxiliary sent a copy to every doctor's wife, and urged her to play it for neighbors as part of "Operation Coffee Cup."

"It's very easy to disguise a medical program as a humanitarian project," Reagan warned the ladies. "From here it's a short step to all the rest of socialism." If they failed to write their representatives in opposition to Medicare, "you and I are going to spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was like in America when men were free."

The Ways and Means idea makes much more sense than the Reagan Administration approach to controlling Medicare and Medicaid costs, which is to make the patient pay a bigger piece of the bill. What matters, after all, is how much we as a nation are spending on health care. It's no better to the economy if that payment appears on the balance sheets as "private consumption" instead of "government spending." Making patients more cost-conscious cannot really introduce market forces into medicine. Who bargains with a doctor when he's sick? Who price shops for X-rays? If the U.S. government doesn't take the lead in directly holding down medical bills, it will soon have an excuse to invade any country in the world it wishes.

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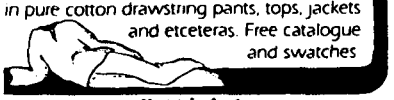

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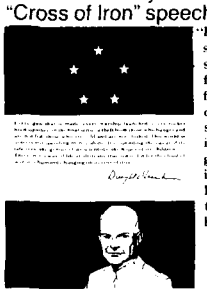

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Gauging Grenada

ONE OF THE MORE striking television sequences from Grenada last week—and there weren't many, thanks to the Reagan Administration's policy of blackout plus censorship—showed a bunch of American medical students applauding a bunch of American Marines. A couple of students started jabbing the air with their index fingers, and then the rest of them picked it up. "We're No. 1!" they chanted. "We're No. 1!" It was natural for the students, in their relief and excitement, to feel giddy—though I thought I detected a trace of irony, of collegiate mockery, on one or two of their faces. Or maybe I just hoped I did. In any case the students were entitled. What worries me is the possibility that the exultation in the White House is equally primitive—minus the irony, of course. Forget E Pluribus Unum. We're No. 1!

GRENADA IS a difficult case, because even though the ramifications of what we're doing there are almost uniformly bad, the thing itself—taken in isolation from the hypocrisy, cynicism, and dishonesty surrounding it, and leaving aside the Administration's motives for doing it—is not. It is not a bad thing, in itself, to overthrow an illegitimate, oppressive, violent, militaristic, dictatorial regime—especially when, as in Grenada, the habits and traditions of the country in question are such that a restoration of orderly democracy is a perfectly realistic goal. The Grenadian regime, moreover, had been scaring hell out of its peaceful, democratic, unarmed neighbors. (It's impressive that so many of these countries seem to have wanted us to do what we did; it's more impressive still, to my way of thinking, that even so left-wing a figure as the Jamaican opposition leader, Michael Manley, according to *The Washington Post*'s Juan Williams, "said in a speech to the Parliament that while he was not in favor of the invasion, he felt it was done with 'good intentions.' ") I'm not saying the invasion of Grenada was, on balance, a good idea. I *am* saying that Grenada is different from Guatemala, where the United States overthrew an elected democratic government in 1954. It's different from Chile, where the United States helped precipitate the overthrow of another democracy in 1973. It's different from the Dominican Republic, which the United States invaded in 1965 to prop up a military junta which had staged a coup to prevent a democratically elected president from assuming office. In all those cases, it wasn't just the ramifications that were bad—it was the thing itself. The U.S. interventions in Guatemala, Chile, and the Dominican Republic fail the test of the categorical imperative. The intervention in Grenada passes it: if every violent dictatorship in the world could be overthrown at relatively small cost, so much the better.

BUT OH, those ramifications. There are plenty to choose from—the loss of the moral high ground on Afghanistan, the damage to the Western alliance, the boost to anti-Yankeeism in the hemisphere, the danger that the Administration will now decide to expand the war in Nicaragua, etc.—but the worst ramification, perhaps, will be the new growth in popular cynicism this episode is bound to produce. The government has been jiving the public, to put it charitably. The claim that a war was required to protect the medical students from being killed or taken hostage seems to have been little better than a lie. Likewise the claim that reporters were kept away from Grenada during the invasion out of solicitude for their safety. Ditto the claim that the national security of the United States was under threat.

THE CLAIM THAT the invasion's purpose was to restore order and promote democracy is slightly more respectable, but it's basically phony too. Order and democracy in Grenada, like disorder and dictatorship in Nicaragua and Guatemala, are incidental to the Administration's main purpose, which manifestly is to reassure itself and to show the world, especially the Cubans and the Russians, that the United States is not a pitiful helpless giant afflicted by the Vietnam syndrome, but a lean, mean, right-wing fightin' machine. Our President says he acted to save Grenada from "leftist thugs." Is there any doubt which half of this formula prompted him to send in the Marines? Sheriff Reagan whirled and fired to his left, and this time he got lucky; he hit a bad guy. But if he'd hit a good guy, I suspect he'd blow the smoke from his six-gun with the same satisfied smile. When Manley was prime minister of Jamaica, before his party lost the last election, Reagan accused him of imposing "totalitarian socialism." Reagan knows all about the distinction between totalitarians and authoritarians, but Mrs. Kirkpatrick must have forgotten to instruct him in the distinction between totalitarians and democrats. This is not a man we can trust to choose our enemies.

THE ADMINISTRATION spoke—correctly—of "an atmosphere of violent uncertainty" in Grenada. In Grenada leftist thugs killed some forty people, and the United States sent troops. In El Salvador during the last three years rightist thugs killed some thirty-seven *thousand* people. We sent troops there, too—as advisers, accompanied by tens of millions of dollars in military aid. This is hypocrisy on a stunning, monumental, deeply corrupting scale. There is no prospect that the government we support will ever bring anyone to justice for any of these murders. And if this Administration does end up sending American troops to El Salvador in large numbers, they will be sent to fight only the guerrillas, not the death squads.

THE PRESIDENT has said many chilling things recently, but none more chilling, I think, than his assurance that the dead need not be prayed for "because they are safe in God's loving arms." One can only hope that he didn't mean it—that he was just mouthing conventional pieties, trying to manipulate the emotions of his audience—but what if he did? What if he really believes in this pretty clouds-and-harps picture of the posthumous consequences of death in war? Listening to him, I recalled the description of the terrorist-suicide who drove the truck full of explosives into the Marine barracks in Beirut. He was wearing his burial shroud under his shirt, and he was smiling beatifically—presumably in the expectation of going straight to paradise as a martyr. Safe in Allah's loving arms. Semper Fi.

H.H.

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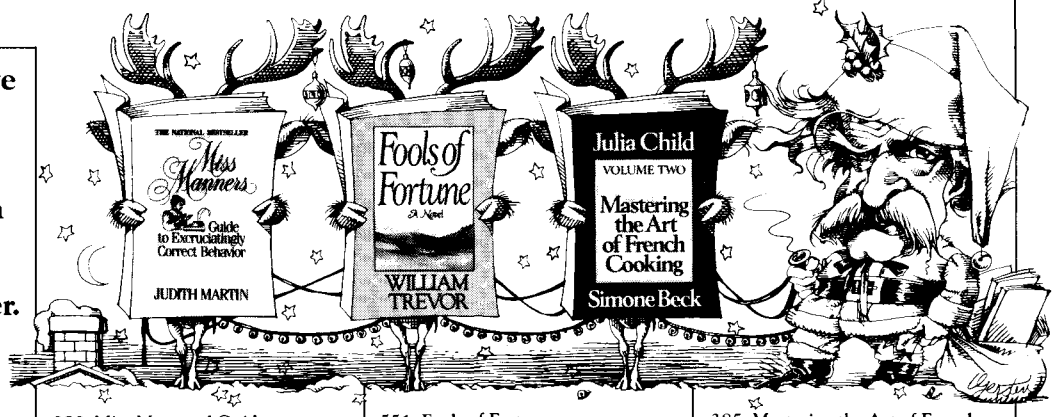

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